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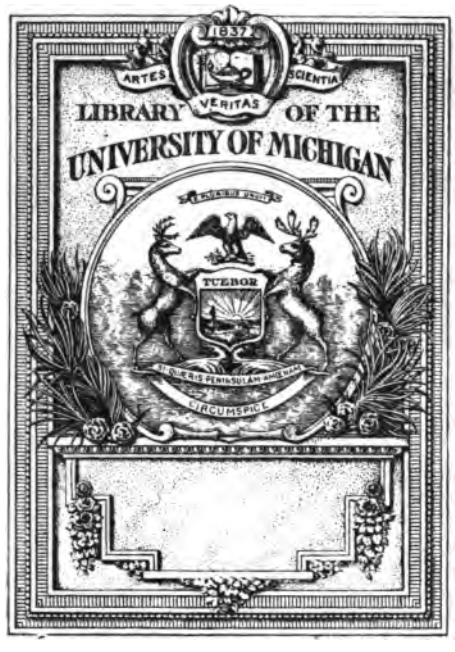
Poet Lore Plays — Series Two

WILL O' THE WISP

JAROSLAV KVAPIL

(*Bohemian*)

Richard G. Badger, Publisher, Boston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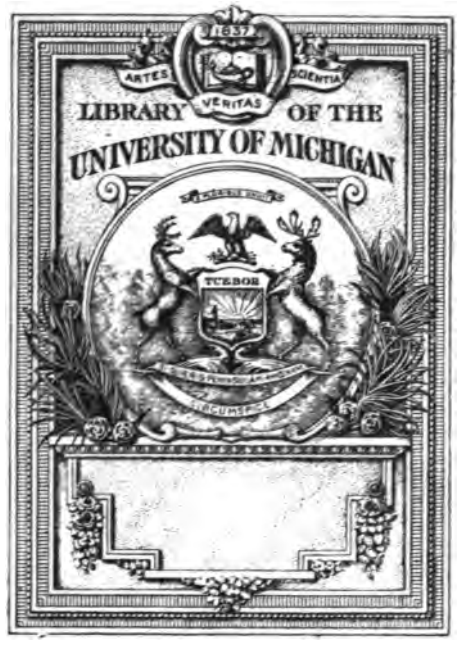
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Poet Lore

VOLUME XXVII NEW YEAR'S 1916 NUMBER I

THE WILL O' THE WISP

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

By Jaroslav Kvapil

Translated from the Bohemian by Šárka B. Hrbkova.

"And forthwith they sprang up because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.

—Matthew XIII. Verses 5 and 6."

Cast of Characters

Kamilo Dušek
Ladislav Hlaváček
Šimr
Vaníček — *painters*

Paroubek
Malina — *sculptors*

Mrs. Heller
Helen Lindner, *her niece*
Dr. Victor Vlasák
Dr. Nedoma
Mrs. Daneš
Clara, *her daughter.*
Mrs. Fabian.
Two of her daughters.

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CHARLES FOŘT.
BOHUŠ V. NOVÁK.
MISS BUKOVSKÝ, *a singer.*
STÁZA FALTYS, *a modiste.*
BUKÁC, *a newspaper reporter.*
RÉZA, BOŽENA } *artists' models.*
Servant at Dr. Vlasák's.

ACT I

The common atelier of DUŠEK *and* HLAVÁČEK. *At the rear an entrance to the front hall, curtained off by embroidered draperies. At the right an entrance into a bedroom, before which is a screen. On the left, occupying the entire width of the wall, a large window. In the left corner a divan above which is arranged a canopy of rugs and squares of faded material. Two artists' easels. The smaller, which is turned at an angle away from the audience, holds a sketching-board with a drawing. The larger easel is turned towards the audience and on it is an unfinished painting of considerable size, unframed. Part of this picture is only outlined in charcoal; the rest of the surface shows the colors laid on. As far as can be recognized, it is to be a picture of Psyche pursued by dogs and geese. The girl's figure—Psyche—is, comparatively speaking, the most finished of any portion of the picture. Throughout the studio there are many small articles of art and furniture, in the corners and on the walls. Sketches, unfinished pictures, costumes, trifles, etc. On the whole, the disorder is artistic.*

Dušek (*Standing with palette before a large canvas and talking to some one behind a Spanish screen*).—Well, we're through for the day, Réza. Come tomorrow at ten if you have time. Will you?

Réza (*Behind the screen and not visible. Some of her garments are thrown over top of screen and she withdraws one garment after another as she clothes herself. She is unseen while speaking*).—To be sure I will. Mr. Šimr doesn't need me any more and I don't go anywhere else.

Dušek.—Is Šimr done?

Réza.—He will be soon.

Dušek.—You'll be lonely now, won't you?

Réza.—For that red-headed Šimr? Go on!

Dušek.—You needn't pretend, Réza! Hlaváček saw you again not long since at Glaubic's. (*He laughs.*) Réza, Réza, what will the locksmith say to that?

Réza.—Nonsense! You don't suppose I'm going to run away from him with Šimr?

Dušek.—It's time Šimr was getting some sense.

Réza.—He? (*She laughs.*) Mr. Dušek, do you know what happened to us the other day at Glaubic's? No? Šimr invited us there, me and Božena, and Mr. Vyhlas also went. Each thought the other one had money; particularly Šimr who changed his last crown and ordered fish and pickles besides. It wasn't till twelve o'clock that they came to a mutual understanding of the fact that together they had only forty-seven kreutzers.

Dušek (*Nods his head and speaks quietly*).—The good-for-nothings!

Réza.—And Vyhlas had nine beers, you may be sure of that! And Šimr has a previous account there.

Dušek (*Displeased*).—He'd better attend to his painting!

Réza.—As good luck would have it, that fellow from the vice-regency who sometimes goes with us happened to be there and he loaned the money to Šimr.

Dusék (*Inquisitively*).—And did Šimr keep on drinking?

Réza (*Laughing*).—Of course! It ended up at Löffler's. (*A pause.*)

Dušek.—Hurry a little, Réza. I'm expecting a caller.

Réza.—Some young ladies, yes?

Dušek (*Harshly*).—What's that to you? (*A pause during which* DUŠEK *paints the lower part of his picture.*) Has Šimr given you back that watch?

Réza.—What watch?

Dušek.—Come, come! You pawned your watch when Šimr didn't have any rent money.

Réza.—And why not? Why shouldn't I help him? Last year when my mother was sick (*She steps out from behind the screen completing the buttoning of her waist.*)—Vaniček also loaned me ten florins. We have to help each other—the fine gentlemen won't help us. (*After a while.*) To be sure, you don't have to make debts any more.

Dušek.—No—and is that such a disgrace? Everyone can be glad when he gets out of debt. Only Šimr has the idea that he'd die instantly if he didn't have debts. (*A commotion is heard*

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in the front hall.) And Hlaváček, here, also has that idea.

Hlaváček (*Enters*).—And Réza also? My respects, Dušek!

Dušek.—Welcome!

Hlaváček.—Are you two gossiping?

Réza.—About you.

Hlaváček.—Confusion! (*He taps* RÉZA *under the chin.*) If only the locksmith knew that Réza still persists in being a model!

Réza.—Well, he knows whom he is courting, and yet he doesn't want anyone else.

Hlavaček.—Well, I don't know about that, Réza! They say a certain countess thinks a whole lot of your locksmith. She owns three locks.*

Réza (*Laughing*).—And she hasn't the key to them, is that it? Let Franta make them for her then! (*Suddenly*) Heavens, here I am plunged in gossip—and at four I am due in Smichov. (*Seizes her little hat and sunshade which were lying on the divan.*) Tomorrow at ten, Mr. Dušek?

Dušek.—And in the afternoon, also; we have to work hard now.

Hlaváček.—Will you come tomorrow, Réza? I will make a sketch for myself at the same time.

Réza (*At the door*).—You'll do the parasite act, I'm sure of that. (*Departing.*) Well, good-bye!

Hlaváček.—Good luck! (*A pause.* HLAVÁČEK *inspects* DUŠEK'S *picture.*) Have you been working long?

Dušek.—Since half past one. I didn't even go to the coffee-house.

Hlaváček.—They were inquiring about you there.

Dušek.—Who?

Hlaváček.—Well, Reitlinger—and those others. I had to play chess with them myself.

Dušek (*Banteringly*).—My, but that displeased you!

Hlaváček.—I'm not going to paint all the time, and where am I to go?

Dušek.—To be sure! If you're not painting, you must sit in the coffee-house or in the ale-house.

Hlaváček.—You've never in your life been there, have you?

*There is here a play on words which cannot be reproduced in English. The word "zámek" has two meanings (1) a lock to a door, and (2) a castle or palace. Hence one who has three "zámsky" may be the possessor of three noble castles or only the humble owner of three door-locks.

(*Shrugs his shoulders.*) As long as I'm not invited by counts and princes——

Dušek.—Oh, keep still! I guess we know each other.

Hlaváček (*Tosses his head*).—As far as I'm concerned—! (*A pause.*) Are you going to work at this now? (*He indicates the large canvas.*)

Dušek. (*Nods assent.*)

Hlaváček.—And what about the portrait?

Dušek (*Points to a smaller easel*).—You see I've already made a study for it. But as long as the young lady won't sit for me, I can't begin. A photograph is nothing.

Hlaváček (*Frankly*).—You'll haul in another couple of hundred milo, wont you?

Dušek.—Paint—and you'll earn some too!

Hlaváček (*Whistles*).—Paint! What—a magpie on a willow? (*Bends his head in the direction of the bedroom.*) I still have a canvas in there—

Dušek.—You could have finished it long ago. But in the morning you walk about the studio and whistle and in the afternoon you play chess at the coffee-house—and before you get home it's almost evening and then you go to Thomas's.

Hlaváček.—Indeed! To Thomas's!

Dušek.—Well, then, to Glaubic's! It's all the same.

Hlaváček.—And the frescoes for Skaliček's house—is that nothing? (*He is silent for a while.*) You know it's not a bit pleasant to parch out there in the sun a couple of hours every day.

Dušek.—Make illustrations, then.

Hlaváček.—Oh, I'd be a great success at that, I would.

Dušek (*In the meantime making a sketch from a small photograph*).—Listen—Ládo——

Hlaváček (*Turns around*).—Well?

Dušek.—Réza said that Šimr has been disgracing himself again at Glaubic's.

Hlaváček.—I don't know what you mean——

Dušek.—Now stop that! As if you weren't with him all the time.

Hlaváček.—If I can't be with you—

Dušek.—To be sure—you'd then have to sit in the studio—and that's not your style!

Hlaváček (*Seats himself astride a chair and leans his elbows on the back of it*).—You've gotten industrious all of a sudden!

(*Laughs.*) Did Pavlik's criticism affect you to that degree?

Dušek.—Don't remind me that they're tearing me to pieces in the papers!

Hlaváček.—Well, that's happened to bigger fish than you.

Dušek.—But they're right—I myself feel how my brains and colors are drying up—and that's what gnaws me and urges me to pull myself together.

Hlaváček.—O thunder! So you also believe things are going to the bad with you. (*He pauses a while then speaks with comic gravity.*) Come, old chap! Retire within yourself and remain there! But don't torment your comrades. (*He laughs.*)

Dušek (*Impatiently*).—You haven't a bit of feeling, Hlaváček. (*Warningly.*) Just wait till that kind of stagnancy seizes upon you!

Hlaváček.—Well, it isn't to be cured by trifles like this scene here.

Dušek (*Peevishly*).—What's the use of talking?

Hlaváček.—You're right! (*Gazes at his large picture.*) Hurry up and finish this canvas, but don't mix with those curs and geese. They will bark and sting you to death.

Dušek (*Surprised*).—Is that so? So *that's* how you interpret my "Psyche?"

Hlaváček.—How else should I interpret it?

Dušek (*Stops in front of his picture and looks at it intently*).—The idea! I meant it in an altogether different way. Those dogs and geese we have also with us, Láda——

Hlaváček (*Laughs*).

Dušek.—And they're with us more than elsewhere, my friend. That's what all the triviality of our sort of life—all the hatred of anything else is, believe me! (*Fervently.*) Only to escape from it, only to escape! To tear to pieces the ropes with which you have tied yourself down to this, to cut to pieces the roots in the soil—(*waves his hand*). Bah, what's the use—in short, I'm thoroughly sick of it all and I want to emancipate myself! (*Sits down again to his portrait and draws. A pause.*)

Hlaváček (*Rolls over on the divan and whistles*).

Dušek (*After a while*).—Again?

Hlaváček.—Am I bothering you? Don't let yourself be interrupted! Your sketching doesn't trouble me in the least when I whistle.

Dušek.—But your whistling bothers me!

Hlaváček.—Do you paint with your ears? (*He rises, and goes sidling across the atelier towards* DUŠEK, *and looks at his sketch.*) Fffff—f! (*Seriously.*) Kamilo, what about this Lindner woman?

Dušek.—What about her? Why, I'm going to paint her, as you see.

Hlaváček.—I'm not asking that! Why doesn't that woman get married? She doesn't lack much of being thirty.

Dušek (*Provoked*).—You gossiping old woman. You do not even know Miss Lindner.

Hlaváček.—I should say I did know her. From the street. Well, and— She isn't one of the youngest.

Dušek (*Irritated*).—And what's that to me?

Hlaváček (*Sauntering about atelier with his hands in his pockets*).—And yet she's a good-looking woman! Such an odd sort of beauty. You'll paint with a zest, Dušek. (*He makes a hissing sound.*) To paint her—well—that wouldn't be a bad idea—but to marry her?

Dušek (*Disturbed*).—Another piece of gossip?

Hlaváček (*Indifferently*).—Oh, not at all! (*Turns around.*) Dušek, do you know Dr. Vlasák? They say he's running after her.

Dušek (*With apparent indifference*).—Don't you believe it. Vlasák is a climber. And he won't marry anyone but a rich bride.

Hlaváček.—That's just it!

Dušek.—Don't think for a minute that Miss Lindner's dowry would suffice for him. My good fellow, you don't know that sort of people; if your dowry is under fifty thousand, they won't speak to you.

Hlaváček.—And the Lindner woman hasn't that much?

Dušek (*Forcing himself to laugh*).—Hlaváček, what's gotten into your head?

Hlaváček.—Well, hasn't she?

Dušek.—Maybe, later on, when she inherits something from her aunt.

Hlaváček.—By that time I wouldn't marry her! (*Merrily*) Dušek, you have a long wait ahead of you!

Dušek (*Bursts out*).—Ass!

Hlaváček (*Laughing*).—And you are my—! (*A pause.*)

Dušek (*Throws down his crayon and buries his head in his hands*).—Oh! Oh! Oh!

Hlaváček (*Surprised*).—What are you sighing about?

Dušek.—Oh, something just struck me . . . (*After a while he puts his hand into his pocket.*) Read this. (*He drawsa crumpled letter from his pocket.*)

Hlaváček (*Takes it but looks at the signature first*). From Stáza. (*Reads. A pause.*) Well?

Dušek.—What do you say to it?

Hlaváček.—Do you want to know the truth?

Dušek (*Lifts his head*).—Well?

Hlaváček (*Taps his fingers on the letter*).—That is what worries and frightens you now. You see? *These* are the ropes which you were cursing. My good fellow, do you know how we all warned you six years ago? And even a year ago you could have retreated—but now?

Dušek.—Did you read what she writes? All at once she wants to leave Prague. And these reproaches! Am I driving her out?

Hlaváček.—She wants exactly the same thing you want. Is she to wait here forever? (*He looks at the letter again.*) As for the rest—I know *why* she wrote it. I talked with her in Spalena Street yesterday; she told me. She has seen you twice with the Lindner woman and her aunt. That's what's the matter. (*Shrugging his shoulders.*) She's a woman—persuade her if you can!

Dušek (*Amazed*).—Is *that* why?

Hlaváček.—And do you think I'm surprised at her? I myself can see that you are getting singed elsewhere.

Dušek (*Lifts his head violently*).

Hlaváček (*Sharply*). Why, certainly—here on this portrait! Dušek, take care—

Dušek (*Irritably*).—If I hadn't buried myself up to my neck among you, I wouldn't feel all this weight. (*Suddenly.*) But I'll get rid of it, I will yet rise above that which has already crushed the rest of you.

Hlaváček (*Humorously*).—Me too?

Dušek (*Violently*).—You too!

Hlaváček.—Well, to be sure I wear a last year's coat, and as for a better pair of boots (*He raises his foot*) I haven't the price either—

Dušek.—You see? A greasy hat and a worn tie are your complete pride—yours and your comrades'.

Hlaváček.—*Yours*? (*Angrily.*) *Baron*!

Dušek.—After all, what's the use of all quarrels? You know Goethe advised the artist to create and not talk. Paint, work as I do—and in a few years we will say what there is to say to each other.

Hlaváček (*Wearily*).—Well, all right! Save yourself then! (*Strikes the table with his hand.*) And I'll drown myself if it'll please you! (*Noticing* DUŠEK's *irritation.*) Well—that's all!

(*The bell sounds in the front hall.*)

Dušek (*Quickly draws out his watch*).—That surely can't be Miss Lindner so early?

Hlaváček (*Amazed*).—Was she to come?

Dušek.—With Mrs. Heller, but not until four. (*He looks at his watch again.*) It must be they. They wish to see the studio. Please open the door.

Hlaváček (*Goes slowly towards the front hall*).

Dušek (*Seizes a clothes-brush, quickly brushes his clothes and arranges his cravat in front of the mirror which stands on a table*).

Hlaváček (*In the meantime opens the door in the front hall*).

Stáza (*Speaks in entrance hall*).

Stáza.—Is Mr. Dušek at home? (*In a lower voice*) Alone?

Hlaváček (*Still in entrance hall*).—Just go into the studio, Miss Stáza.

Dušek (*Starts when he hears Stáza's voice*).

Stáza (*Enters atelier after tapping on door*).—Am I not interrupting? Good afternoon.

Dušek (*With feigned calmness which later changes into impatience with regard to Stáza's departure. At times he looks expectantly at his watch*).—Ah, God's greeting to you, Stázička.* How does it happen that you're not at the shop?

Hlaváček.—Say, Dušek, I'll go around to Brunner's in the meantime and get that passe partout.

Dušek (*Seizes him by the sleeve, disturbedly*).—Wait! (*Aloud.*) He'll bring it when he's ready. (*Turns.*) Sit down, Stázička!

Stáza.—Thank you, I won't stay long. (*In a broken tone.*) I have just come to say good-bye.

Dušek (*Shakes his finger at her*).—Stáza! Stáza!

Stáza (*Seeking to gain command of herself*).—No, Mr. Dušek, it is settled. Tomorrow I leave for Vienna. My sister is already awaiting me. I have not been in the shop since Tuesday—what should I do in Prague?

Hlaváček (*Who has seated himself on the corner of the divan in*

*Stazička, a diminutive of Stáza, used in a sense of tenderness or caress.

order to be as little as possible in the way of this intimate scene).

Dušek.—And what is driving you out of Prague?

Stáza.—Ka-mi-lo! (*She bursts out crying*.)

Dušek (*Impatiently*).—Lord, Lord, such trouble!

Stáza (*Seeking* HLAVÁČEK *with tear-filled eyes, she speaks between sobs*).—Mr. Hlaváček, you know it yourself, don't you? I haven't come to upbraid Kamilo. If he'd only say one word or move a finger—(*She breaks into fresh weeping*) haven't I many, many times wanted to go away, and hasn't he as often held me back?

Hlaváček (*Forcing himself to be calm*).—You know, Miss Stázička, what I think about it. I told you yesterday, and I'd give Kamilo a talking to also——

Stáza.—I ought to go away, oughtn't I?

Hlaváček (*Remains silent a moment and then says firmly*).—Yes!

Dušek (*Bursts out*).—Hlaváček!

Hlaváček.—Why then did you detain me here?

Stáza (*Trying to control herself*).—Mr. Dušek—

Dušek (*Looking at her*).—Do you really want to go away?

Stáza.—Y-e-s!

Dušek.—Stázička, heed wise advice. You are going away on an empty errand, you don't even know what——

Stáza (*Interrupts him*).—And do I not live emptily here! Just remember, Mr. Dušek—six years! (*She weeps again*.) I didn't come to reproach you; we were both young and unwise then . . . (*She offers her hand to* DUŠEK.) Good-bye!

Dušek.—Stáza, don't complain afterwards that *I* deserted you.

Stáza (*Touching the photograph which is leaning against the smaller easel and gazes at it intently. Then she seizes it and hands it to* DUŠEK).—Do you think I don't know all? (*Indicates the photograph with her other hand*.) You see, that I stand in your way!

Dušek (*Bursts out, jerking the photograph from her hand*).—For God's sake, I implore you, Stáza, don't torment me with this too! You used to be jealous of the models who came here—and now I wouldn't dare even to paint a woman's portrait! (*Violently*.) I paint whom I choose!

Stáza (*With bitter calmness*).—And I will not hinder you! (*She falls into silence for a few moments and then extends her hand to* DUŠEK.) Good-bye, Mr. Dušek!

Dušek (*Exasperated*).—Good-bye! (*Extends his hand to her.*)

Stáza (*Turns away and bursts into sobs*).

Hlaváček (*Moves*).—Miss Stázička. . . .

Stáza (*Extends her hand to* HLAVÁČEK). Thank you, Mr. Hlaváček. (*She ceases crying for a few moments.*)

Dušek (*Excited*).—Stáza!

Stáza (*Crying again and indicating with her hand that he is not to detain her*).

Dušek (*Seizes her hand*).—Stáza, don't be angry with me! If you only knew—

Stáza (*With a smile of pain*).—I know! (*She draws a ring from her left hand.*) This ring—was—from you—Mr. Dušek. (*She offers it to him.*)

Dušek (*Pushes aside* STÁZA'S *hand*).

Stáza.—No—I must return it to you! (*She lays it on the table.*) Let there be an end to it forever. (*She presses a handkerchief to her eyes.*) Good-bye! (*Departing towards the door she extends her hand to* HLAVÁČEK.) Good-bye, Mr. Hlaváček!

Hlaváček (*Accompanying* STÁZA *to the door, presses her hand*). —It will be best for you both this way. And if you insist on going to Vienna, why. . . (*He departs with* STÁZA, *towards the entrance*).

Dušek (*Advances after them, but at the door by a motion of the hand he indicates a sudden resolution. He returns. He puts his hands to his head and with staring eyes gazes into space. He seats himself on a low stool and buries his head in his hands. After a while, he arises, in a listening attitude. Looking towards the table where* STÁZA *had placed the ring, he reaches for it and drawing a purse from his pocket throws in the ring. The door in the entrance hall bangs.* DUŠEK *sighs deeply*).

Hlaváček (*Returns, incensed. With long strides, his hands in his pockets, he paces the studio. After a pause*).—Hereafter enact such scenes as this without my presence, I beg you, Dušek!

Dušek (*striking his hands together*).—For God's sake, please, Hlaváček . . . (*Explodes.*) You have something for your companions and the ale-house—haven't you?

Hlaváček (*Suddenly and wrathily*).—Dušek! (*Maliciously.*) Now the ropes are torn to pieces—and now—you can soar! Away off somewhere to the New Town to St. James' Square—yes?

Dušek.—Ládo, if you knew how I feel now you wouldn't torture me!

Hlaváček.—Oh, you'll console yourself again. (*Recovering.*)

And for that matter, do what you please! (*Pulls out a drawer in the table and stirring up the papers therein, indifferently.*) Didn't you see that book here that I brought yesterday?

Dušek (*Who has meantime consulted his watch, then quickly removed his coat, untied his necktie and unbuttoned his collar. From the case on the shelf he takes a clean collar, and another tie and dresses himself*).—No, I didn't.

Hlaváček (*Observing him, indifferently*).—Are you going somewhere?

Dušek (*Dressing himself*).—Where would I go? You know the ladies are coming.

Hlaváček (*Making a hissing sound*).—I know!

Dušek (*Measures him with his eye, then goes into the bedroom from which he almost immediately brings another coat. He puts it on. Speaking angrily*).—Did *I* drive out Stáza?

Hlaváček (*Curls his lip*).—No, you didn't drive her out! She almost stayed long enough to meet the Misses—ahem—the Misses Lindner! (*He seizes his hat.*) Well, just so that Stáza is out of your way, yes? (*He crushes his hat down upon his head.*) Say, I'll return about six. If Šimr should come—

Dušek (*Interrupts him*).—Wait for him yourself!

Hlaváček.—To be sure, now we'll *all* get our walking papers since you have—(*He breaks into a laugh.*)—emancipated yourself!

Dušek (*Explosively*).—And do you know who always abused me the most on account of Stáza? It was you, Hlaváček, you! You and your companions used to mock at me—and when I protested, you rolled your lips in scorn. (*Changes his voice to imitate* HLAVÁČEK's) "Miss Stáza—why not?" (*Breaking off.*) and today you content yourself with every model.

Hlaváček.—Only that I don't get mixed up for a full six years with one! And if I should, I don't kick her off just the instant another skirt dazes me!

Dušek.—Ládo (*Beats his breast with his clenched hand.*) On my soul, you should not torture me today! Don't you see for yourself that something better has moved within me than disgust with my recent intrigue? Don't you see for yourself how superficially, trivially we live, day after day, without disturbance and without growth? I would have suffocated in the atmosphere if I had not awakened in time. What I have done—to Stáza today was cruel—I know it!—but it is better at once when she herself wished it, than to drag down not only her but myself also.

Hlaváček.—Yourself also! That is your system of ethics!

Dušek.—Just consider, Láda, what have I accomplished in those six years? Where am I today when I am thirty-two years old? In order not to disturb myself from the madness of my youth I vegetated—like a mere hired clerk who plans out his day to fit the occupation of his sweetheart. (*Puts his hands to his temples.*) How I could have grown elsewhere and how I have buried myself here to no purpose! In the moments when I was nearest the inspiration of my thoughts, I had to throw down my palette because it happened that the hour was drawing near when Stáza was leaving and when I was to wait for her. What did she say to me, how did she uplift me? We talked about her companions, about the troubles they had in the shop, we rambled the streets—and we welcomed Sunday as our salvation because we could ride out by steamer to Chuchle or to Závist.

Hlaváček.—You didn't say a word of this even in our last year at the Academy.

Dušek.—Indeed, I didn't. I was a madcap boy. On the strength of a little warm water at the coffee-house, I babbled about the Bohemian life and I wanted to copy scenes from Murger. And I wanted to have in this Prague puddle of ours my own petite femme—you know in what a crazy state I returned from Paris? Made giddy by the frivolity and recklessness of a superficial life I wanted to enhance my supposed genius.

Hlaváček.—And who then is to blame? I? Or we? Or your surroundings, the atmosphere which you breathed, the soil into which you grew? (*Waves his hand.*) Kamilo, Kamilo,—everywhere on earth it's the same! Except that it may have some other form.

Dušek.—Aha, some other form! Larger and freer; a form which does not strangle and lace you in. (*Clasps his hands.*) Lord, Lord,—how petty it all is and how useless! And you sit at the bottom—at the very bottom—and roll your eyes—and moralize!

Hlaváček (*Surprised*).—I?

Dušek (*Cuttingly*).—You, too!

Hlaváček.—It appears, then, that—(*The bell in the front hall sounds.*) Here you have them, go and open the door! We can finish telling each other another time.

Dušek (*In the meantime goes to the front hall and opens the door*).—My deepest respects, gracious lady—my deepest respects, Miss! (*A rustle in the hall.*) Enter, please. (*He leads the ladies into the atelier.*) My friend, the painter Hlaváček. (*Mutual bows.*)

Mrs. Heller (*Looking around*).—So this is how it looks in a studio!

Hlaváček (*With a smile*).—In a neglected studio, gracious lady.

Helen (*Extending her hand to* DUŠEK).—First of all, let me thank you, Mr. Dušek, most cordially for the Böcklin. It is a splendid work.

Mrs. Heller.—Although somewhat incomprehensible. You'll pardon me, gentlemen,—but your modern art is a little heavy and mysterious for us ordinary mortals.

Helen (*Laughing*).—Auntie is opposed to all modernism! But don't be angry, the modern poets fare just the same with her.

Dušek.—And how about you, Miss? (*Noticing that the ladies had not yet seated themselves.*) But I pray, ladies! (*Indicating the divan.*)

Mrs. Heller (*About to seat herself on a nearby stool*).

Dušek (*Pointing to a divan*).—Ah, gracious lady, I pray!

Mrs. Heller.—Thank you, thank you—it's all one!

Helen (*Seating herself on the divan*).—I will sit here myself—and the sign says I'll not marry!

Dušek (*Smiling*).—Don't forget, Miss, about our modern art! Do you like it?

Helen.—Assuredly more than Auntie does. There is something illusive—tempting about it (*She laughs.*) You know, I'm not an aesthetic. But everywhere in foreign countries I prefer the salons to the galleries. The galleries are serious and dead in their classicism—but in the salons there is warmth and evolution, life breathing with passion. . . Is it not so, gentlemen?

Dušek (*Inspired and amazed*).—Miss——

Hlaváček—It seems we could easily win over Miss Lindner to our guild.

(DUŠEK *gives* HLAVÁČEK *a displeased look.*)

Helen.—Most assuredly Mr. Hlaváček! (*With coquettish modesty.*) I paint a little myself.

Dušek (*Surprised*).—Indeed?

Mrs. Heller.—Helen has temperament—that's true! (*Laughing.*) She didn't even want to leave Paris last year.

Helen.—The gentlemen will readily understand that.

Hlaváček.—And we certainly envy you!

Mrs. Heller.—Apropos, Mr. Dušek, we are not coming alone here. Dr. Vlasák promised that he would come for us here.

Dušek.—Ah, I beg——

Helen.—And my portrait, Mr. Dušek? How shall we arrange about it? Aunt thinks that you could paint at our house—that is—at *her* home, for we wish to surprise father with the portrait.

Mrs. Heller.—If it would not be too much trouble for Mr. Dušek, it would, perhaps, be the best plan.

Helen.—Although—I'm not afraid of studios!

Mrs. Heller.—But still it's inconvenient, Helen . . Isn't that true, Mr. Dušek?

Dušek.—If you will give your consent——

Helen.—You couldn't, then, paint from the photograph?

Dušek (*Takes the board from the easel and shows the drawing to the ladies*).—I have made a slight beginning. In the meantime it's only on paper as an experiment——

Mrs. Heller (*Looking at the drawing*).—But the likeness already appears.

Dušek.—Miss Lindner will now allow me to paint wholly from life.

(HELEN *nods her head assuringly.*)

Mrs. Heller (*In the meantime examines the studio*).—Ah, what charming miniatures and unfinished pictures. (*Gazes at* DUŠEK'S *large picture.*) Is that yours, Mr. Hlaváček?

Hlaváček.—Alas, no, gracious lady!

Mrs. Heller.—Ah, then it's Mr. Dušek's!

Dušek.—But now it will wait.

Helen.—Won't you delay yourself with my portrait?

Dušek (*With a smile of mute denial*).—May I begin soon?

Helen.—Perhaps at once—tomorrow—yes, auntie?

Mrs. Heller.—It will be better to begin after Sunday, Helen, dear. If Mr. Dušek is to paint at our house, the back room must be prepared.

Helen.—It is a corner room, Mr. Dušek, and there is plenty of light.

Hlaváček.—Is not some one rapping? (*Listens.*)

Helen.—Perhaps Dr. Vlasák has already come for us.

Dušek.—Apparently he didn't notice that we have a bell. Pardon me, ladies—(*Goes to front hall*).

Mrs. Heller.—And what are you painting, Mr. Hlaváček?

Hlaváček.—Scarcely anything, gracious lady!

Vlasák (*Having knocked, enters with* DUŠEK).—My greetings, ladies!

Mrs. Heller.—Good evening, Doctor!

Helen.—You certainly hurried. (*She offers him her hand.*)

Vlasák (*Advances towards* HLAVÁČEK, *with a measured bow*).—Doctor Vlasák.

Hlaváček.—Hlaváček, the painter. I'm pleased to meet you. (*Extends his hand.*)

Helen (To HLAVÁČEK).—But you surely paint something, Mr. Hlaváček. (*Pleadingly.*) Please show it to us!

Hlaváček (*Easily*) Miss Lindner embarrasses me. I don't paint at home at all, Miss Lindner, because I'm now doing ornamental work on the home of Skalíček, the architect.

Mrs. Heller.—And have you nothing at all at home?

Hlaváček.—Only a picture just begun. But it's getting a rest now there in our bedroom, for it would uselessly litter up the studio.

Mrs. Heller.—Ah, so you also live here? How pleasant?

Helen (*Goes to door at right*).—May I?

Dušek.—Oh, Miss Lindner—I beg, please—don't go in there! Old bachelors' disorder—

Helen.—What of it? (*Enters the smaller room.*) This?

Mrs. Heller.—Helen is so willful! (*Laughs.*)

Dušek (*Follows* HELEN *into the smaller room*).—I beg you, Miss Lindner, don't notice our housekeeping!

(HELEN *laughing audibly behind the scenes.*)

Hlaváček (*Talking at the same time*).—I'd sink with shame if I couldn't show the ladies something better. (*Laughing.*)

Helen (*Returning*).—Auntie, you ought to see that picture! That's surely modern enough!

Dušek (*Coming after her*).—Please don't tell Hlaváček, lest he imagine that its modernness consists in the unfinished condition of his picture!

(*All laugh.*)

Vlasák.—Mr. Hlaváček would be no exception.

Helen.—It would be a rare case that would escape a rubbing in from you.

Mrs. Heller.—Allow me, then, Mr. Hlaváček! (*She enters the smaller room.*)

Dušek (*Behind her*).—And again I beg, that you don't get frightened at our disorder.

Hlaváček (*Merrily shrugging his shoulders*).—I must go and at least defend my masterpiece since it arouses such attention! (*Enters the small room.*)

Helen (*Who has paused, meantime, in front of the screen which*

separates her from the entrance to the smaller room, gazes at DUŠEK'S *picture.*)

Vlasák (*Steps up to her quickly*).—Do you look at such things?

Helen.—Look at it too! (*She laughs and her eyes glow suddenly.*)

Mrs. Heller (*Behind the scenes*).—Here is a whole storehouse of paintings—allow that!

Vlasák (*Looking at the picture*).—The original is even prettier.

Helen (*Looking longingly at the picture*).—That's a poor compliment for the artist!

Vlasák.—Especially in this sort of costume.

Helen (*Strikes him lightly with her glove*).—Fie, you shameless one!

Vlasák (*Tries to put his arm around her waist*).—Surely, Helen isn't jealous?

(HELEN *laughing, strikes him again with her glove and follows him to the center of the studio.*)

Mrs. Heller (*Enters with the artists*).—Helen, dear! Again tormenting someone?

Helen (*Bent on mischief*).—Throw him out, gentlemen. He is slandering your pictures!

(DUŠEK *slightly taken aback.*)

Hlaváček (*Laughingly*).—Luckily I haven't the smallest piece of canvas here.

Mrs. Heller.—Now we've seen everything, Helen, dear, and we'll go. (*Gives her hand to* DUŠEK.) May I beg of you, then, Mr. Dušek?

Dušek (*Kisses her hand*).—Whenever you command, gracious lady.

Helen (*Also gives her hand to* DUŠEK *and does not drop his hand until she finishs speaking when she lightly shakes it*).—Then it's arranged for after Monday! I'll send you a message yet, or maybe I'll write you.

(DUŠEK *kisses her hand with a happy smile.*)

Helen.—My respects, Mr. Hlaváček! (*Beckoning to him.*) Come, Doctor!

(HLAVÁČEK *bowing deeply.*)

Mrs. Heller (*Simultaneously*).—Good-bye, Mr. Hlaváček!

Vlasák (*Extending his hand to* HLAVÁČEK).—My respects. It was a pleasure to meet you.

(*The ladies have in the meantime entered the front hall.*)

Vlasák.—Your servant, Mr. Dušek! (*Noticing that* DUŠEK

is going with the ladies.) Ah, so you'll escort us—(*Departing. A stir in the front hall.*)

Helen (*Laughing in the front hall*).—It seems to me, Mr. Dušek, it seems to me—!

(HLAVÁČEK *accompanies the party as far as the door and then returns to the studio with an easy, swinging step.*)

Dušek (*Laughingly in front hall*).—I could convince you, Miss Lindner. (*A pause.*) My deepest respects. Yes, yes, with absolute assurance. My respects. (*The front door closes.* DUŠEK *returns to the studio.*)

Hlaváček (*As soon as* DUŠEK *enters,* HLAVÁČEK *snaps his fingers and turns on his heel*).—Well, we're in it, now!

Dušek (*Still excited by his callers now looks surprisedly at* HLAVÁČEK.)—What the devil is the matter with you again? (*At that instant the bell in the front hall rings violently to the rhythm of a military march*).

Hlaváček.—Still another caller? Is the stream of our visitors to be uninterrupted today?

Dušek.—Well, they don't distract *you* from work! (*Renewed ringing.*) Very likely it's that wild Šimr!

(HLAVÁČEK *has gone to the front hall.*)

(DUŠEK *stops in front of a small easel and involuntarily gazes at the photograph of* HELEN.)

Hlaváček (*In the front hall where he is unlocking the door*).—Why, Šimr, my respects to you! How does it happen you're going so early?

Šimr (*Entering the studio*).—Your servant, Dušek!

Dušek (*Excited*).—Your servant!

Šimr.—I couldn't wait till Réza came; I met her way up by the bridge. (*A pause.*) Were those women who were coming down the stairs up here to see you?

Hlaváček.—That is—to see Dušek.

Šimr.—Who is it?

Hlaváček (*Tosses his head*).—Dušek is painting her. Miss Lindner. Do you know her?

Šimr (*Whistles shrilly*).—And so *that's* the Lindner? (*To* DUŠEK.) Ha, ha—Dušek, that's something, isn't it?

Dušek (*Explosively*).—What's something?

Šimr (*Laughing*).—Well, so, so! That other one—does she watch her?

Dušek (*Becoming wrathy*).—Shut up, Šimr, will you?

Šimr.—Ah—in order not to drag down *your* scutcheon, so?

Dušek (*Violently*).—You know I'm not going to run around with models to Glaubic's any more, as you do. (*A pause.*) I don't grasp in what way that lady has injured you that you talk about her so! You are always complaining that there is no understanding for art in our society—and when some one does appear who understands it, you scoff at him.

Šimr (*Tosses his head*).—My world suffices for me!

Dušek (*Indicating* ŠIMR *with his thumb*).—Do you hear, Láda? What did I say?

Hlaváček.—Don't begin again, I beg of you!

Dušek (*Crossses the studio and laughs contemptuously*).—And the best thing about it all is that you call this artists' life! You botch up some small order just enough so that you could get something to eat out of it——

Šimr (*With feigned gravity*).—Ah—mainly— to *drink!*

Dušek (*Shaking his finger*).—Just own up! It is suffocating here among you just as in those ale houses! (*Spreads out his hands.*) Lord, lord, how gladly I'll fly from here!

(ŠIMR *looks at him amazedly.*)

Hlaváček (*Surprised*).—What—?

Šimr (*Nudges* HLAVÁČEK).—That's on account of her, eh?

Hlaváček (*Nodding to* ŠIMR).—Well, Kamilo—then those dogs and those geese—(*Indicating the picture with a motion of his head*) will remain for us after all?

Dušek.—That's something different, you heard very well! What makes me wrathy is that you indulge in such coarseness. Especially Šimr here.

(ŠIMR *grins.*)

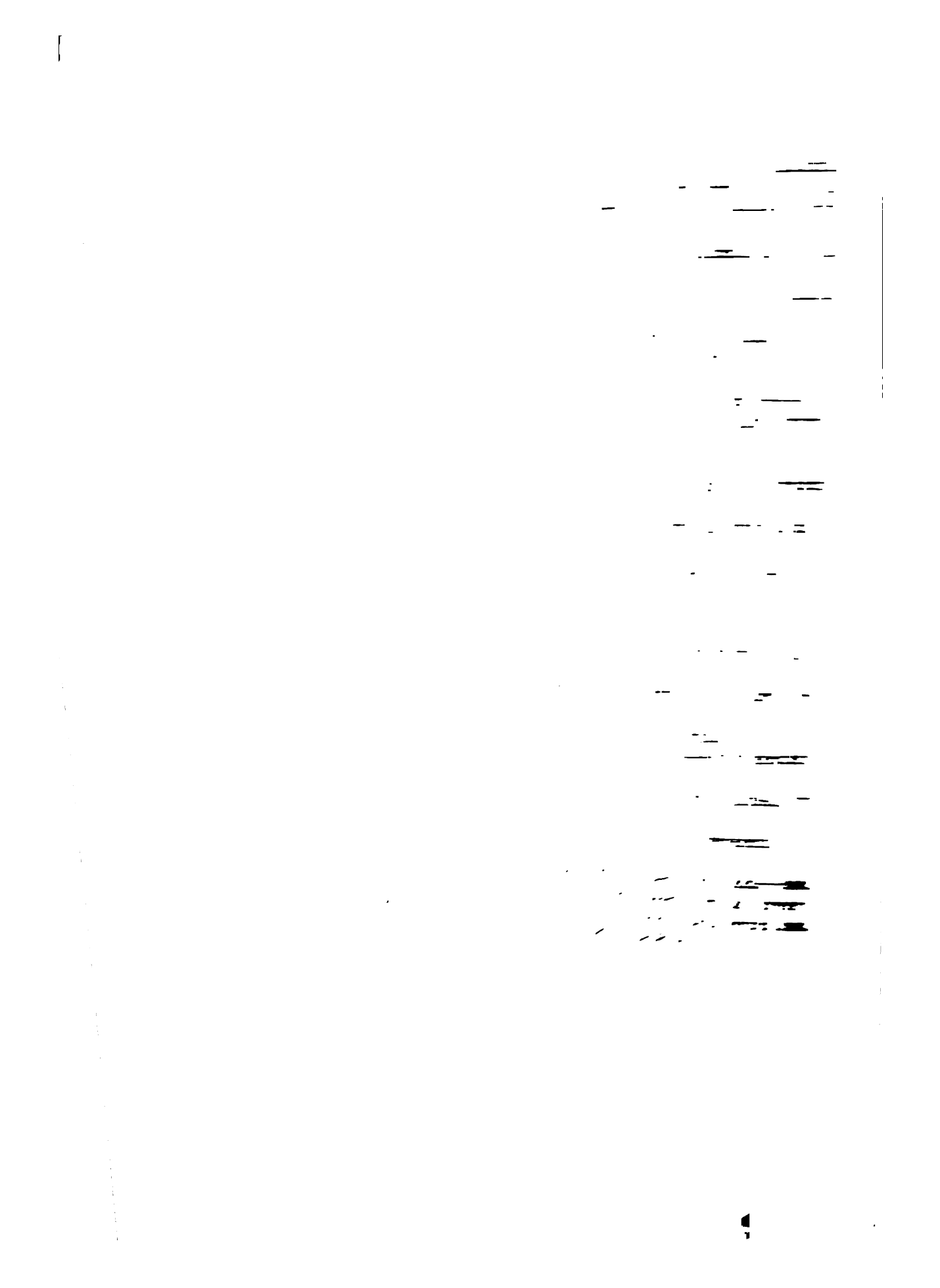
Dušek.—Well, laugh, laugh, you idiot!

Šimr.—And are you going to take Stáza there with you?

Dušek (*Furiously*).—Šimr! (*Steps up to him and then stops.*) As if I didn't know you!

Hlaváček (*Motioning to* ŠIMR).—Let him alone, Šimr! (*To Dušek.*) And you get a little sense, you childish man! What do you care, after all, for the Lindner? You'll paint her, draw a few hundred—and enough! What are you getting excited about?

Dušek—No one mentioned money! You are only angry at society because you haven't its money. (*Angrily.*) Oh, to be sure! Are you envious because I paint better portraits? Don't hang around the ale-houses, don't disgrace yourselves on the streets—and then people will notice you, too. (*To* ŠIMR.) You know very well no man is going to Thomas's to hunt you up in



ACT II

MRS. HELLER'S *reception rooms. The chief reception room has appointments showing the taste and luxury typical of a wealthy family of Prague's most eminent circle. At the right an entrance to the front hall, in the rear an open door through which one can see into farther rooms likewise tastefully decorated. At the left side of the room there are windows, also a divan and a fauteuil arranged in a semicircle. The lights in all the rooms are burning brightly. Men in evening clothes, ladies in rich toilettes of light colors.*

(MRS. HELLER *enters from rear, dressed in a simple, tasteful gown as befits the hostess.*)

(NEDOMA *enters at the same time from front hall.*)

(VLASÁK *enters behind* NEDOMA.)

Mrs. Heller (*Frankly*).—At last, then, our doctor! (*She extends her hand to* NEDOMA.) Ah, Dr. Vlasák! (*Extending her hand to* VLASÁK.)

Vlasák (*Kissing* MRS. HELLER'S *hand*).—Are we not to be scolded gracious lady, for coming late?

Mrs. Heller.—What are you thinking of? You are practically the first ones. Only the Daneš and Mr. Dušek have arrived as yet. (*Quickly*) To be sure—the artists also, Mr. Bláha and Miss Bukovský.

Nedoma. (*Merrily to* VLASÁK).—There—what did I say? It is, my friend, still good form to come very late. (*Draws out his watch and shows it to* MRS. HELLER.) The company is invited for eight, is it not? Please note—it is half past eight—(*He points to the face of the watch*) and still we'll wait longer!

Mrs. Heller (*Laughing*).—You are bad, doctor! Why, Mr. Dušek is already here—

Nedoma (*Cuttingly*).—To be sure, I comprehend how it is Dušek wasn't late!

Mrs. Heller.—and the Daneš. (*With a smile.*) And now, you don't comprehend why Dr. Vlasák came late, do you?

Vlasák. (*Hesitates*).—But, gracious lady—

Nedoma.—Then it is really Miss Daneš?

Mrs. Heller.—Didn't you know it, doctor? Oh, you must immediately offer congratulations!

Nedoma (*Offering* VLASÁK *his hand*).—Should I?

Vlasák (*Lightly protesting*).—Our gracious hostess speaks a little too definitely. . . . . .

Mrs. Heller.—Well, and—? Mrs. Daneš doesn't contradict in the least when it is mentioned.

Vlasák (*Slightly surprised*).—Really? (*With a smile.*) Truly, dear Mrs. Heller, your news is always agreeable——

Nedoma.—And how about Miss Daneš?

Mrs. Heller.—You don't know even that? And you are their family physician?

Nedoma.—But *only* their physician, my dear lady. Among our sort it is true that a physician may also become a family confidant but not in every case. In your household, to be sure, that honor is accorded me.

Mrs. Heller (*Laughingly*).—Our doctor is even gallant at times!

Nedoma.—Is that so strange?

Mrs. Heller.—Strange enough especially since some one of us is ill all the time. Why, you don't even have any time left for gallantry.

(HELEN *enters from the back through the door at the left. She is dressed in a rich and daintily attractive gown.*)

(DUŠEK *follows her. Since the first act* DUŠEK *has changed into a perfect dandy; his evening clothes are faultless, his hair smoothly brushed and his beard cut according to the mode.*)

(VLASÁK *bows silently to Helen who extends her hand.*)

Nedoma (*Greets* HELEN *and presses* DUŠEK's *hand*).—If one wouldn't seek you in reception halls, Mr. Dušek, he never would find you in your studio.

Vlasák (*Gives his hand to* DUŠEK).—My respects, Mr. Dušek! Never mind in the least the doctor's reproaches, Mr. Dušek. Today is again one of his bad days.

Dušek (*To* NEDOMA).—Ah, did you struggle clear upstairs to see me, Doctor?

Nedoma (*Surprised*).—Didn't you find my card?

Mrs. Heller.—Pardon me, gentlemen. (*She departs through the left door at the rear.*)

(*All bow silently.*)

Nedoma (*To* DUŠEK).—I was at your studio Sunday morning—and today is Wednesday.

Helen (*To* DUŠEK).—What! You haven't been at the studio since Sunday? (*She shakes her finger at him.*) You! you!

Nedoma (*To* HELEN).—And you scold Mr. Dušek for that?

Perhaps if you definitely command him. . . . . .

Helen.—Just see, Mr. Dušek, what a protector you have won! (*To* NEDOMA).—But, truly, I myself am to blame that Mr. Dušek is so busily occupied. (*Indicates* DUŠEK) Sir, my instructor in painting! (*Laughing*) And my faithful advisor in everything at all times. He even designed my ball costume for the National Beseda.*

Nedoma (*Amazed*).—Thunder! (*To* DUŠEK) So you are becoming not only a modern but a fashion artist?

Dušek (*Slightly piqued*).—What I heard from you, doctor, concerning my last picture, was my greatest incentive.

Nedoma (*Gravely*).—Pardon me, I gave you counsel in all frankness!

Dušek (*Caustically, bowing*).—I'm assured of that!

(NEDOMA *turns away indifferently.*)

Helen (*Wishing to change the conversation*).—Please be seated, gentlemen! Or do you wish to go into the other room?

Nedoma (*Seats himself on the divan*).—Let's talk in here before the rest of the company arrives. (*With a smile*) Although Dr. Vlasák may be drawn towards——

Helen.—Oh, to be sure! (*To* VLASÁK) Clara is here, doctor. (*She points to the rear.*) If you wish——

Vlasák (*Disturbed*).—Oh, Miss——(*He seats himself*) I am in constant suspicion here.

(DUŠEK *seats himself.*)

Helen (*Seating herself*).—He who doesn't defend himself.—

Nedoma (*To* DUŠEK).—Apropos, Mr. Dušek, I just went up to your place Sunday to ask you for Mr. Hlavaček's address.

Helen.—Mr. Hlaváček is here. Aunt invited him for today.

Nedoma (*Pleasantly surprised*).—Really? (*To* DUŠEK) I needn't even trouble you then——

Dušek (*Bitingly*).—I beg!

Nedoma.—nor need I interrupt you in your tailorish problems. (*He laughs.*)

Dušek (*Angered*).—I don't comprehend, doctor, why you call me——

Helen (*Quickly interrupting*).—Don't you know, Dr. Nedoma? He will rebuke you for a whole year because you weren't in your studio those three days.

Nedoma (*significantly to* DUŠEK).—In a year, we'll say to

*The chief social event of the season in Prague.

each other what we have to say.

(*A knocking at the door.*)

(HELEN *arises.*)

Fořt (*Enters from the front hall*).—My respects, gracious Miss! (*He kisses* HELEN'S *hand and silently bows to the gentlemen.*)

Vlasák (*Gives his hand to* FOŘT).—Good-evening, colleague!

Fořt (*With a bow to* NEDOMA).—I take the liberty of introducing myself, Karl Fořt.

Helen (*Quickly*).—Ah, I beg pardon; I thought the gentlemen were acquainted. (*Introducing.*) Doctor Nedoma.

Nedoma (*Extending his hand to* FOŘT).—I'm glad to know you, Mr. Fořt.

Helen (*Indicating a chair*).—Please, Mr. Fořt.

Fořt (*To Helen*).—You were not even at the academic ball. (*To* DUŠEK). And you, Dušek, didn't come either!

Nedoma.—Do you wonder at it?

Fořt.—But for that, Dr. Vlasák here——

Helen (*Looking at* VLASÁK).—and Miss Daneš was there too, wasn't she? (*She laughs.*)

(FOŘT *laughs and nods assent.*)

(MRS. HELLER *enters from left door near rear.*)

(HLAVÁČEK *follows her. The state of his clothing indicates that it was secured in a hurry. He has a coat which was apparently made for another figure and wears a loosely tied neckkerchief.*)

Mrs. Heller.—Ah, Mr. Fořt! Welcome!

(FOŘT *kisses her hand.*)

Mrs. Heller.—It seems that the gentlemen don't want to join our company. (*To* HLAVÁČEK) Allow me, Mr. Hlaváček. (*Introducing*) Doctor Nedoma; your sincere admirer.

Nedoma (*Arising*).—Mr. Hlaváček? Ah, this is a pleasure! (*Presses* HLAVÁČEK'S *hand cordially.*)

Mrs. Heller.—I asked Mr. Hlaváček especially for your sake. (*A knocking on the door.* MRS. HELLER *steps to the right.*)

Mrs. Fabian (*Enters with her daughters. She hastens in an affected manner towards* MRS. HELLER).—Ah, my dear! How kind you are! (*The* FABIEN *girls kiss* MRS. HELLER'S *hand.*)

Mrs. Heller (*To the newcomers*).—Please come! (*She nods towards the door at the left near the rear.*) And the gentlemen will also surely come; we shall begin the program now.

(*All arise departing separately.*)

Nedoma (*Detaining* HLAVÁČEK *to the last. When the company has passed out, he pauses with* HLAVÁČEK *at the rear*).—May I

detain you, Mr. Hlaváček? (*Laughing.*) Or do you want to hear the program?

Hlaváček (*Returns with him towards the front*).—I'm at your service, doctor!

Nedoma (*Seating himself*).—They won't miss us. Let's sit down!

(HLAVÁČEK *sits.*)

Nedoma.—Mrs. Fabian has brought her daughters; the concert will surely begin with the "Slavonic Dances."

(HLAVÁČEK *laughing.*)

Nedoma.—Where those young women go, they play the "Slavonic Dances" for four hands. Mrs. Fabian in the meantime fairly overflows with bliss. But no doubt we'll hear it way in here—and it would be better if we didn't hear it at all.

Hlaváček.—The doctor evidently isn't a lover of music.

Nedoma.—Why not? But I don't coquette with it. (*Points in the direction of the main reception room*) All these yawn—at least in spirit—at such a musical soiree, but that doesn't stand in the way of their talking learnedly about music as if it were their daily bread. They go to concerts—and are bored; they go to the opera and are bored. But while music is the fashion they must not remain away. (*Behind the scenes* DVOŘÁK'S "*Slavonic Dances*" *is played on a piano.* NEDOMA *listens.*) Do you hear?

Hlaváček (*Laughing*).—The doctor is a good guesser!

Nedoma.—I beg you! (*Spreads himself comfortably in the chair.*) I am, in my turn, interested in pictures. Not because it's the fashion, but from an innate fondness for them. I have a nice collection of originals.

Hlaváček.—And an excellent reputation among painters, doctor. I am all the more sorry that I sold my "Will o' the Wisp" since I learned recently that it might have become your property.

Nedoma.—Listen, Mr. Hlaváček! (*Gazes at him intently.*) You are a true friend of Dušek's, are you not?

Hlaváček (*Somewhat surprised by the question*).—For years, doctor. We came to the academy together from the technical school and since last summer we have had a company studio.

Nedoma.—You have separated now?

Hlaváček.—That is to say, Dušek wanted to be alone. When we have finished a song, there are easily different opinions. You understand.

Nedoma.—With regard to your friend, certainly. But what —you fell out with each other?

Hlaváček.—Oh, not at all—the bonds became looser just gradually.—We are friends as before—except that the former heartiness is lacking. (*Laughing.*) To be sure—here to this gathering—we came together; Dušek had to introduce me.

Nedoma.—Oh, well, you'll get used to this sort of thing.

Hlaváček.—I'd almost say, doctor, that I'd be afraid of it. (*Confused.*) Oh, Sapristi! I'm talking a little too freely.

Nedoma (*With a smile*).—Oh, just go ahead and talk! If I were Dušek I would envy you that tenacity.

Hlaváček.—Really?

(NEDOMA *nods.*)

(*A pause.*)

Hlaváček.—But Dušek has completely adjusted himself to a different atmosphere.

Nedoma.—He was adjusted into it, as the saying goes. (*Significantly.*) A will o' the wisp as in your picture—you know? But for that he has changed into a perfect dandy. (*Throws his head in direction of other room.*) Well, hasn't he? (*Making a motion with his hand.*) If he'd paint more and better, it would be better for him.

(HLAVÁČEK *nods.*)

Nedoma (*Warming up*).—But what insults me the most is the decline of his taste, his artistic consciousness. And you, Mr. Hlaváček ought to be even more hurt by it. (*Violently.*) Why, thunder, he has gotten so mixed up in those enchantments that he has become Miss Lindner's tailor!

Hlaváček (*Not comprehending*).—It isn't possible!

Nedoma (*Bursting into a laugh*).—Indeed it is! He designs her costumes and—is making a paintress of her! You know how such a young woman paints—to be sure, she isn't hindering anyone, so let her paint! But Dušek impressively raves about those daubs of hers. (*Spells out the words*) im-press-ive-ly raves, I tell you. And not only out of gallantry! Everywhere that he sets foot. And he believes what he says. (*Violently*) That's how stupid he has become here, that's to what degree his senses have become stultified!

Hlaváček.—Do you think, doctor, that I don't feel it all doubly?

(*A pause.*)

Nedoma (*Suddenly*).—Oh, well, what's he to us, anyway? Let's talk about something else! In the first place— since you've sold your "Will o' the Wisp" you must paint me something else

soon—you understand—(*Someone knocks.*)

Novák (*Enters the room*).—My respects, doctor!

Nedoma.—At your service, Mr. Novák. Well you *have* been detained! Don't you hear? (*He points towards the rear from which the sound of music is heard.*)

Novák.—Really? Pardon me, I must offer my greetings to the lady of the house. (*He departs through rear.*)

Nedoma.—Do you know him?

(HLAVÁČEK *shakes his head.*)

Nedoma (*Caustically*).—Bohus Vladimir Novák, the poet of Prague reception rooms! (*Looks intently at* HLAVÁČEK.) Haven't you read anything of his? (*Dryly.*) Neither have I. And I hope no one in Bohemia has, either. But—he's a poet! Yes, indeed, a highly gifted poet as any one in society will attest—even Mrs. Daneš although she reads only Marlitt and Haecklander.

Hlaváček.—Aha, he's a parlor specialist!

Nedoma.—Excellent! A specialist! Our social set, my friend, scorns the other castes but nevertheless, it feels that it lacks something. So, to make up this lack, it coddles up in its own greenhouse this sort of compensation, for it is too supercilious to accept from another order of society what it does not have itself. (*He points behind the scenes.*) BohusVladimir Novák suffices for our social set, as the entire field of literature. And since society recognizes him as a poet, ergo——

Hlaváček.—Mr. Novák is an authority. (*Laughs.*)

Nedoma.—And see, that's why Dušek can never perfectly plant himself in this social set. Even in the most modern garments with the newest perfume on his neck-cloth he will ever remain a common parvenu. (*Quickly.*) Nota bene, a parvenu *without* money; only a parvenu *with* money looks as if he might belong among us.

Hlaváček.—Among *you*, doctor? Pardon me, but your views——

Nedoma (*Laughs*).—Ah, so, I understand! You see, my friend, I am a physician in those families. I live with them, know their weaknesses, I understand them—and—I forgive them. "We are caught together, we will hang together" say the Germans. I am, my friend, a cynic even in their company. But that suits them, hence, they like me. A family physician, Mr. Hlaváček, is also a piece of furniture in a reception room.

Hlaváček (*Frankly*).—Then the atmosphere,—has no in-

fluence on you, doctor? (*He laughs.*)

Nedoma.—The atmosphere, my friend, devours only the weak. Every atmosphere. Only the other day, I had a great debate about that with your friend Dušek.

Hlaváček (*Assenting*).—A beloved theme of his in recent times!

Nedoma.—Isn't that so? He complained that he had to escape from his hitherto atmosphere by main force in order to save himself from crumbling. He had to save himself, he said, and get into freer, clearer air.

Hlaváček (*Smiling a little*).—He is slurring his own nest!

Nedoma.—Do you know what I said to him? That any medium can not gnaw at a strong man. And may the devil take a weak man! Among us or among you—the same holds true. But a new medium devours a weak man much quicker.

Hlaváček.—And Dušek is in a new medium!

Nedoma.—Exceedingly so! And, my friend, he is in great error, in the meantime. He seeks in our society what doesn't exist there. The new colors and the new perfumes have deluded him—nothing more. Fundamentally it is the same. Except for the fact that Dušek's awakening will be all the more terrible when he comes to, in a strange world.

Hlaváček.—And yet—he has found here a new intoxicant!

Nedoma.—What good does it do him? Does it create anything in him or bring anything out of him? Not a thing. Did you see his new picture?

(HLAVÁČEK *nods.*)

Nedoma.—Well—then! And that is only the beginning of the end. (*A pause.*) You ought to give him a talking to.

Hlaváček (*Smiles*).—I'd fare ill, if I did.

Nedoma.—He's touchy, isn't he? Another sign of a fall. And, my friend, he's fallen into quite an agreeable world, where at least they rave about art, if nothing else. Sir, we are, so to speak, in an artists' hall, here. (*Laughs.*) Truly, though, Mrs. Heller herself has enough earnest interest. But—the rest! But Mrs. Heller is taming them; note—first, the musical competitions of artists and dilettantes—and, no supper until eleven. (*Looks at his watch.*) I am hungry now.

Helen (*Enters at the rear with Clara*).—O ho! here are two deserters! Go at once and listen!

Nedoma (*Laughing*).—Won't you relieve us of duty? Come, Mr. Hlaváček; the ladies are evidently longing for confidences.

Helen (*Shakes her fan at him*).—You—truthful man! Mr. Hlaváček has found fine entertainment among us on his very first visit.

Nedoma.—He who seeks, always finds, my dear lady.

Helen.—Mr. Hlaváček was hardly looking for—you.

Nedoma.—But I was looking for him! Come, Mr. Hlaváček we mustn't be in the way. (*Departs*, HLAVÁČEK *with a bow follows him.*)

Clara (*Sits down*).—Do you know, Helen, dear, what they are saying? That Dušek is courting you?

Helen (*Laughing as she seats herself*).—And is that why you've dragged me here? Are you jealous of me?

Clara (*Embarrassed*).—Tell me, Helen, dear, do you intend to marry him?

Helen (*Laughs aloud*).—Well, well,—you, little stupid! Do you think I want to get married á tout prix?

Clara (*Suddenly*).—Don't you want to get married? (*Timidly.*) That is—you don't want to be married to Dušek, isn't that so?

Helen (*Merrily*).—No! But why such speeches?— (*She looks closely at* CLARA.) Ah, that's it. (*Insinuatingly.*) I don't want to marry anyone, my good little soul,—not anyone!

Clara (*Astonished*).—Honestly, don't you want anyone?

Helen.—Dearie, isn't it *you* who is in love?

Clara.—Hush, Helen dear!

Helen.—They say that Vlasák wants you, doesn't he?

(CLARA *confused.*)

Helen.—And they say that you ought to be jealous of me.

Clara (*Reproachfully*).—Helen, dear!

Helen (*With a smile*).—Am I so dangerous?

Clara.—You are, Helen dear, you are!

Helen (*Flatteringly*).—But not to you, Clara, love. You are a very wealthy prospective bride.

Clara.—Mamma reminds me of that constantly.

Helen.—Well, there you have it! I can't be dangerous to those who wish to marry rich. For me there would be—for instance—(*Laughing*)—Dušek!

Clara (*Unbelievingly*).—And would you want him?

Helen (*With a smile*).—For a husband?

Clara.—Why, then, does he come to see you?

(HELEN *laughs aloud.*)

Clara.—And aren't you sorry for him? Doctor Nedoma

said not long ago at our house that Mr. Dušek is failing.

Helen.—Well, that's once that the *physician* in Nedoma didn't speak! Maybe he was speaking of his pictures. (*Surprised.*) And what of it? Can I command him to paint more or better? Can he paint at all when he goes about all day, seeking opportunities to meet me, when he makes friends with those fops who he imagines are favorites in my aunt's house? With that Fořt and that Novák? (*Dryly.*) But he *has* changed, hasn't he?

Clara.—All on account of you, Helen dear—and for that reason you ought to be honest with him.

Helen (*Laughs bitterly*).—Marry, Clara, dear, marry! You should marry while you still have faith in men!

Clara.—Has some one deceived you?

Helen (*Haughtily*).—Some one—me? Because I'm not seeking a husband? (*Shaking her head.*) Child, child!

Clara.—Believe me, dear Helen, I don't understand you.

Helen.—Because I don't care to marry? Well, you know, sweetheart mine, I know men a little. Do you think than man, Dušek, is any better? Until recently, he went about with a milliner.

(CLARA *surprised.*)

Helen.—Yes, a milliner! For six years he had relations with an ordinary milliner. Vlasák knows it, ask him! He lived with her and adapted himself to that queer sort of society while he had a girl from that sphere. Now he is crazy about me—and makes friends with any fool of our set. (*Merrily.*) Now that's charming, isn't it? Do you think that what happened before insults me? Why? On the contrary—that mannerly big-eyed artist stimulates me! He has entertained me during the entire winter with his courtship. (*Convincingly.*) Oh, my girlie, he has fine feeling! With his whole being he hangs on every movement of my lips! I barely speak and, like one intoxicated, he loses himself in my moods. (*A pause.*) Such marvelous power wouldn't please you, would it?

Clara (*Astonished*).—After all that you know about him?

Helen.—Do you know anything better about the men of our own set? And if you don't know—can you take oath that they are different? And, for that matter, would you want a husband who had not sowed his wild oats?

Clara.—You want to tease me, don't you, Helen, love?

Helen.—Tease you? Don't demand much in matrimony

and you won't miss much. And then—do I want to marry Dušek?

Clara.—Of course, you can't do that. But you could tell him.

Helen.—Why, when he hasn't asked me?

Clara.—And if he does propose some time?

Helen.—He will never get to the proposal. And if he does speak out, still—well——

Clara.—Well?

Helen.—Well, let him speak out! It will be a joke.

(FOŘT *enters at the rear and stands near the other room.*)

Helen (*Observes* FOŘT).—He won't be the first to speak unadvisedly. (*Points to the rear.*) That one has already blurted out his love—and how stupidly. Just wait!

Fořt (*Advances*).—The company is wondering where the ladies have concealed themselves. (*To* CLARA.) Miss Clara, you ought to hear Bláha's concert numbers.

Helen.—And not I?

Fořt (*Naïvely*).—No, not you. I would like to say something to you.

(CLARA *and* HELEN *laugh outright.*)

Vlasák (*Enters at rear*).—In a little while the entire company will have moved to the front reception hall—and Mr. Bláha can play for himself.

Helen.—Doctor, you must set things right! Clara was just about to return; escort her to the music room. Anyway, Mr. Fořt wants to avow his love for me, he has owned up to it.

Fořt.—I wouldn't be so bold.

Helen.—What sort of confidences can you have that Clara mustn't hear them?

Fořt.—That's a secret.

Vlasák (*To* CLARA).—Come, Miss Clara, or else Fořt will yet betray his secret to us. (*Departing with Clara towards the music room.*)

Fořt.—Do you take me for such a fool? My dear sir, I've been a match for cleverer people!

Vlasák (*Looks around and laughs*).—Thank you for the compliment!

Mrs. Heller (*Entering from other room*).—It seems to me that our guests are not enjoying themselves very much. Some one runs away every little while.

Vlasák.—I've been looking for the deserters, my dear lady,

and I'm gathering them up for Mr. Bláha's concert.

Mrs. Heller.—Please do!

(VLASÁK *and* CLARA *leave.*)

Mrs. Heller (*Follows them but stops at the rear*).—Helen, dear, aren't you coming?

Helen.—Wait a minute, auntie—just a minute. I want to hear out Mr. Fořt. (*Laughs.*)

Mrs. Heller (*Merrily*).—Poor Mr. Fořt. (*Departs.*)

Helen (*Seating herself*).—Well, then—you fountain of news!

Fořt.—Do you know what I want to tell you?

(HELEN *shakes her head.*)

Fořt.—Dušek is in love with you.

Helen (*With comic amazement*).—You don't mean it?

Fořt (*Naïvely*).—Don't you know it? Last evening we were at Nikl's and Dušek confided in me. (*Laughs emptily.*) That was some fun! He told how beautiful you are—really—he said that!—and what talent you have——

(HELEN *laughs.*)

Fořt.—I laughed at him, too, until I got him wrathy. He said to me "If you only knew how such a woman uplifts a man!" And he owned up to me that he'd die without you!

Helen (*In humorous vein*).—And did he tell you to tell me?

Fořt.—Why, what do you think? I had to promise that I'd not betray him. (*Innocently.*) See, again some one loves you!

Helen (*Alluringly*).—Why, don't *you, any more*?

Fořt (*Confused*).—I, Miss—? (*Hesitates.*)

Helen (*Laughs*).—Ah, thou bumpkin!

Fořt (*Foolishly*).—Aren't you poking fun at me, Miss Helen?

(DUŠEK *enters at rear and stands still in door of music room. From behind the scenes are heard the passionate, longing strains of a violin.*)

Helen (*Laughs outright at* FOŘT).—Go and listen to that virtuoso, go! (*Notices* DUŠEK.) Look, Mr. Dušek is afraid of that violin!

Dušek (*Enters slowly*).—Am I intruding?

Helen.—Just come in, Mr. Dušek, and take Mr. Fořt's place.

Fořt.—Miss Helen always finds some agreeable excuse when she wants to get rid of me.

Helen (*Laughing*).—Do you know, Mr. Fořt—(*Stopping*) But why should I make you angry at me?

Fořt (*Departing*).—I renounce the rest of my punishment

in favor of my friend Dušek.

Helen (*With comical surprise*).—Man, man,—but you're witty!

Fořt (*Blissfully*).—I should say so! (*Bowing, departs.*)

Helen.—Mr. Dušek, it appears, has been wholly entranced by those artistes in the four-handed performance! (*Laughs.*) Or by Miss Bukovský? Or Clara?

Dušek.—Miss——

Helen.—Ah, Clara? Don't try to compete with Vlasák.

Dušek.—Is it the truth?

Helen.—About Vlasák and Clara? Why yes, Mrs. Daneš is already telling of it publicly.

Dušek.—And Dr. Vlasák?

Helen.—I beg of you! Clara is a wealthy catch—and that's enough. (*Seats herself.*) Do you care to stay here a while with me? Or do you want to listen to Bláha?

Dušek (*Glowing*).—Oh, Miss Lindner—if you'll allow——

Helen (*Indicates with a wave of her hand the divan where she herself is sitting*).—Come, sit down.

(DUŠEK *seats himself.*)

Helen.—It's rather tiresome back there, isn't it?

(DUŠEK *is silent.*)

Helen (*After a while*).—Tell me, what you are doing nowadays. It's a pity you're not a landscape artist; there must be plenty of motifs in the snow covered plains and drifted forests for landscapists, don't you think so? When the sun vanishes in the mists and everything is lost in the grayness—(*A pause.*) Do you remember the other day how we rode in the sleigh from Zbraslavi? Did you notice how Novák frowned when we were getting into the sleigh because you and not he sat in our sleigh?

Dušek (*Laughing*).—Poor Novák! He hardly spoke to me that evening.

Helen (*Leaning backward*).—By the way, why don't you ever paint landscapes? Oh, if I only had your brush! I'd like to paint a vast winter landscape —monotonous, immeasurable.

Dušek.—Paint it, Miss Helen! You can do it better than I.

(HELEN *laughing softly.*)

Dušek.—Oh, indeed you can! You surely don't think I'm flattering you? For scarcely a year have I been allowed to slightly cultivate your technique of form—and ere long I shall be useless to you!

Helen (*Gazing at him*).—Useless? Oh, now you are cruel!

Why, do you think society will have had enough of you when you will have had enough of my painting?

Dušek (*Confused*).—Oh, no! I have come from another sort of world and I will know, that I'd very soon have to leave this one forever if it were not for that happy chance. (*His speech grows lower but more impassioned.*)

Helen.—What chance?

Dušek.—That I may keep vigil over your hand as it paints and at the same time be one of those who are—(*He becomes silent and then bursts out warmly*) one of those who are, after all, happier mortals!

Helen (*With alluring charm*).—And who are they?

Dušek.—Those who are nearest to you, even if they are indifferent.

Helen.—Indifferent *to me*? Why, haven't I the right to tolerate about me only those who are not indifferent to me?

Dušek (*Becoming more and more impassioned as a result of* HELEN'S *nearness*).—You have—but you are too good, to use your power.

Helen (*Laughs oddly, with bitterness*).—I, good? (*Thoughtfully.*) Ah, because our entire social set hasn't wholly wearied me as yet?

Dušek.—Social set? Oh, no, not your set,—but— (*Softly and timidly*)—I.

Helen (*Touches* DUŠEK'S *hand resting on the divan*).—*You!* You overesteem our social set.

Dušek (*Pleadingly, in a tone trembling with joyful unrest*).—Miss Helen!

Helen (*Waves her open fan merrily*).—Oh—Oh—Oh! (*Laughs.*) Mr. Dušek, have you, too, become a hypocrite? Or do you want me to flatter you?

Dušek.—How? And I a hypocrite? Oh, believe me,—all others can easily be truthful!

Helen (*Points towards the rear*).—Those in there? (*Laughs.*) Ah, Dr. Nedoma—yes, yes—he is sometimes almost too truthful! But who beside him? Fořt? He speaks the truth only out of ignorance. Or Novák? He would choke on truth judging by the way he belies himself.

Dušek.—There are others there——

Helen.—Oh, yes, Dr. Vlasák, perhaps. But he dares tell the truth only to Clara now. (*A pause.*) Or could you be jealous—(*Laughs*) of that old Mr. Daneš?

Dušek (*Surprised*).—Jealous?

Helen (*Captivatingly*).—To be sure, jealous! Everyone is jealous who imagines he is not the first one— or the only one.

(DUŠEK *shows excitement.*)

Helen (*Suddenly*).—Pst! (*Tensely. She again touches* DUŠEK'S *hand. She listens to the music of the violin. After a moment she looks inquiringly at* DUŠEK.)

Dušek (*Embarrassed*).—And may I speak, then?

Helen (*Laughing*).—Why, why, Mr. Dušek, what has happened to you? (*Frankly.*) Just as if we didn't all like you, indeed, as if you were merely tolerated among us! Believe me, I myself am very grateful to you for many reasons. I can't define it—but it is as if you had brought something new into my life, a little real interest for art, a little dispelling of the monotony of our social existence. (*Gazes at him.*) To be sure, I am becoming enriched by what you lose, many insist. You do not paint, you are losing your broad outlook, they say,—and all that you have, you give to me.

Dušek.—Miss—Helen! (*Seizes her hand. Helen does not draw it away*)—would it be a sin even if it were the truth? You thank me for a few moments which have really enriched *me* and for a little inspiration which is only a slight return for my great inspiration drawn from you. (*Ardently.*) May I tell it all?

(HELEN *remains silent.*)

Dušek.—Or—is it really *necessary* for me to tell it?

(HELEN *as if lost in thought, shakes her head.*)

Dušek (*Speaks more and more ardently, in a suppressed voice which almost thrills on the waves of the violin's strains*).—You know it, don't you? And you are right when you say I am losing myself wholly in you, in your being. I believe it would be the end of me to wake from that which intoxicates me now. (*Points towards the music room.*) They, in there, can't comprehend what has become of the former wanderer, unstable and roving. But they are mistaken if they think that therefore the artist in me is dying. Believe me, my art can not die while it lives through your being!

Helen (*Held by his ardor*).—Am I so powerful? (*Involuntarily leaning backward until her head nearly rests on* DUŠEK'S *arm.*) Well, that is strange—(*She speaks in a more and more suppressed and fervent manner.*) Heretofore everyone has told me that I was not on earth for the happiness of others—And I myself had begun to believe it! (*Recovers herself.*) But no, no—

these are only moments which fill me with longing. (*Quickly.*) No, no, no, Mr. Dušek—I beg of you, don't believe it!

Dušek (*Firmly grips her hand*).—I can't control myself. And I believe in you even if you don't believe in yourself. I am carried away by something stronger than an instant of intoxication and I'm too weak to free myself from its power. (*Gently draws* HELEN's *hand to his bosom.*) Do you hear the violin?

(HELEN *bows her head.* DUŠEK's *lips touch her hair.*)

Dušek (*With passionate eagerness*).—The weeping of the violin is blended here with the perfume of your hair, with the warmth of your hand, with the revelation of your being. You, yourself, no longer have the power to lift the spell from me!

(*He kisses her hand passionately.*)

Helen (*Recovering*).—No, no, no—Mr. Dušek, please don't believe it! Don't believe in this hour, don't believe even in me! (*The violin music ceases and applause is heard.* HELEN *withdraws her hand from* DUŠEK's *grasp. Merrily.*) You gallant knights! You know well how to soar! And so ardently and sweetly! (*Arises.*)

Dušek (*Gradually awakening from his intoxication*).—You aren't angry?

Helen (*Cordially extending her hand*).—Child! Why, did you say something so very wrong?

Dušek.—But you——

Helen.—Did you not see that you *might* tell me?

Mrs. Fabian (*Speaking behind the scenes*).—Truly marvelous! Such a violin solo——

(DUŠEK *in the meantine kisses* HELEN's *hand again and draws her close to him.*) Thank you! (*Touches her forehead with his lips.*)

Helen (*Freeing herself suddenly.*)—Come, come—(*Laughs.*) or else they'll catch us here like two lovers! (*Seizes* DUŠEK's *hand and draws him towards the other room. There they meet* MRS. FABIAN *and* MRS. DANEŠ.)

Mrs. Fabian (*In perpetual exaltation*).—Oh, Mr. Dušek, you missed that splendid violin solo! How could you miss it? You yourself an artist—why, you ought to have that much sympathy for another sort of art!"

Mrs. Daneš (*Emitting her words crunchingly from between her teeth*).—Mr. Dušek is satisfied with an obscure corner from which he may listen.

Helen (*To* DUŠEK).—Didn't I say that they'd suspect us?

(*With conscious intention*) How easily Mr. Dušek could have compromised himself here with me! (*Takes his arm.*) Come, Miss Bukovský will make up our loss to us. (*They depart.*)

Mrs. Fabian (*Goes slowly forward into the room*).—A really charming lad is this painter. And how talented, so they tell me! A regular genius!

Mrs. Daneš (*Cuttingly*).—It's a pity his genius is a little entangled just now.

Mrs. Fabian.—So he's really in love? (*Pointing back of the scenes.*)

(MRS. DANEŠ *nodding significantly.*)

Mrs. Fabian.—Mon Dieu!—An artist—how could it be otherwise? (*Longingly gazing after the departing pair.*) Fortunate ones!

Mrs. Daneš.—But I don't understand Helen!

Mrs. Fabian (*Surprised*).—Why! Such a divine artist!

Mrs. Daneš.—I don't know whether that would suffice for Helen after marriage.

Mrs. Fabian.—How you talk, Mrs. Daneš!

Mrs. Daneš.—Would you give your Juliana to him? Or Joanna?

Mrs. Fabian.—But dear me, our girls needn't even think of marriage yet!

Mrs. Daneš.—And later you'd change your mind about it! (*Seating herself.*) Heavens, Mrs. Fabian, believe me—I often wonder at Mrs. Heller for caring so much for these so called artistic people.

Mrs. Fabian (*Seating herself*).—I don't quite comprehend you, Mrs. Daneš——

Mrs. Daneš.—They may be good people, I'm not saying anything about that—but—please tell me the sense of getting them accustomed to our sort of life? They can't live up to it, my husband also says it—they just can't live up to it! They haven't the education or the income. You know what the result will be? Discontentedness, my dear Mrs. Fabian, discontentedness and debts. (*From behind the scenes is heard a girl's voice in song accompanied by a piano.*)

Mrs. Fabian.—We will miss that delightful Miss Bukovský!

Mrs. Daneš (*Undisturbedly seizes her hand*).—Debts, Mrs. Fabian, debts! and the outcome of it all? Oh, there'll be a public collection, they'll come to you with a subscription sheet—and—what are you going to say to them?

Mrs. Fabian.—My heavens!

Mrs. Daneš.—To be sure, who cares for five or ten dollars. You'll gladly give it just as I do. But in the first place, there's too much of it—and then, dear Lord, how can those people feel in our company when they know that every little while a collection has to be taken up for some one of them! Here a nation's gift to an author, there a benefit for an actor who doesn't even act any more, in a day or two, a monument to a poet——

Mrs. Fabian (*Tries to speak*).—Please——

Mrs. Daneš (*Makes no pause in the flow of her eloquence*).—Very good, very good,—we like to give, but once in a while it is overdone. It isn't a matter concerning only those poverty stricken artists but at once they make out of it a sort of national duty and some people get glory out of helping to get the suscriptions. They want to get appreciation—and we have to do the paying!

Mrs. Fabian (*Embarrassed*).—We have run away from the music room. They will miss us. (*Rising.*) Come, let's hear at least a little of the program.

Mrs. Daneš.—Mrs. Fabian won't listen to a thing against those artist people! Oh, of course, of course, your daughters are halfway artists also——

Mrs. Fabian (*Glowingly*).—I am proud of them. Everyone praises them so much.

Mrs. Daneš.—Our Clara also plays. And sings. But now it's all going to stop for there'll be other worries. (*Slips her arm through* Mrs. Fabian's. (*Confidentially.*) Frankly speaking, Mrs. Fabian, I'll be glad when that Dr. Vlasák speaks out. I've really had fear of Helen; she knows so well how to fascinate men! And I believe the doctor was more than half caught. By good fortune this artist is here now and he has somewhat broken off matters. (*Confidentially.*) But his falling in love is all in vain, believe me, all in vain! I'm almost sorry for the poor fellow; Dr. Nedoma said here not long ago that he isn't even painting nowadays——

Mrs. Fabian (*Amazedly*).—It isn't possible! Such a talented fellow—I've heard! Why, that love ought to inspire him——

Mrs. Daneš (*Dryly*).—I beg of you,—*that* love! What sort of match is it? Helen, to be sure, will some day be Mrs. Heller's heiress—but she has a good while to wait! How much of being thirty does she lack? And Mrs. Heller is of my age, she won't die right away. (*A pause.*) (*The singing behind the scenes has*

ceased and applause is heard.)

Mrs. Fabian (*Disappointed*).—Why, we've missed everything!

Mrs. Daneš.—Oh, well, we'll hear enough yet. At any rate, we've had a good frank talk.

Mrs. Fabian.—We must go back, they will miss us. (*As they depart, they meet, at the door, with* Miss Bukovský.) Ah, Miss Bukovoský, it was charming, delightful! We all repeat, you are our nightingale. Such a pleasure when you are on the stage!

Miss Bukovský (*With a smile*).—My gracious lady is truly one of our most loyal patrons.

Mrs. Fabian.—You're surely not going so early? After such triumphs?

Miss Bukovský.—Oh, no indeed, dear lady; I just ran off for a breath to this room. (*All is spoken in the other room.*)

Vlasák (*Joins this group, accompanied by* Helen).—Are you receiving congratulations, Miss Bukovský?

Miss Bukovský.—Surely not for those few measures of song? (*Laughs.*)

Mrs. Fabian (*Enters at the rear*).—But we'll surely hear something more?

Miss Bukovský.—I don't know. (*Departs with* Mrs. Fabian.)

(Mrs. Daneš *departing with them.*)

Vlasák (*To* Helen).—Am I again in disfavor?

Helen (*Standing with him in the entrance to the music room*).—I wish to say something to you. Quickly, or some one will come. (*She goes towards the front.*)

Vlasák.—Ah! (*Follows her to the front.*)

Helen (*Gazing at him steadily*).—Victor, Dušek proposed to me a while ago.

Vlasák (*Surprised*).—Today?

(Helen *nods assent.*)

Vlasák.—Not before today?

Helen.—Seriously, Viki, seriously! I'm sorry for him!

Vlasák (*Laughs*).—I am, too.

Helen.—I am going to tell him the truth. I'm resolved.

Vlasák (*Points towards rear*).—To Dušek?

Helen (*Decisively*).—To Dušek.

Vlasák (*Thoughtfully, after a pause*).—Has he done you any harm?

(Helen *laughs.*)

Vlasák.—Why, then, should you injure him? And what do you want to tell him? That you are indifferent to him? He will go mad. (*His lips twitch.*) Or else do you mean to tell him *all!*

Helen (*Bitterly*).—I almost ought to.

Vlasák (*Dryly*).—Helen, dear, leave out the sentimentality! (*More animatedly.*) And what did you say to him?

Helen.—Nothing.

Vlasák.—Well—then! (*He seats himself.*) Helen, dear, I am still here.

Helen.—I know—Clara's intended.

Vlasák.—No, Helen—your lover! (*Seizes* HELEN'S *hand.*)

Helen (*Slowly steps back*).—That must cease now! That doesn't happen any more—(*With an odd laugh*)—even in immoral novels! (*She seats herself.*)

Vlasák (*Passionately*).—Helen, what have you done? I burn when you only touch me, you consume me with your beauty, you stifle me with your passion—and your glowing lips set me afire when you speak! (*Sits down beside her on the divan.*)

Helen (*Lightly running her fingers through his hair, as she looks into his eyes*).—There,—there— but you're in love! You do love to be petted—and you're almost in tears. And what sad eyes you have! (*She taps him with her finger under the chin.*) Well, you must get over it, Viki.

Vlasák.—Do you know what they are saying, Helen? That Mrs. Daneš is openly talking of Clara's wedding.

Helen (*Calmly*).—Well, and——

Vlasák.—And you won't—strangle me?

Helen (*Laughs aloud*).—They are *saying*? Are they really saying it? And for that I am to be jealous? Or to cause a scandal?

Vlasák (*Embraces* HELEN *violently*).—Helen, I love you!

Helen (*Withdrawing herself from his arms*).—Just marry her, marry her! (*Gravely*) I am not a moneyed match, Viki.

Vlasák (*Reproachfully*).—Helen!

Helen.—Didn't you know it? (*Tenderly.*) Sweetheart, you must marry. Do you think that I surrendered to you in order to win a husband the more easily? (*Bitterly.*) In one's twenty-sixth year, my boy, and with my dowry a woman of our set can't desire more than what *you* have given me! (*Earnestly.*) Don't pretend—I beg of you at least don't do *that*! Did I want more? And do you think others have not courted me? Rich, respected

(*Laughing*) and aged suitors? (*Again changing her tone*) Ugh! Am I to sell myself? (*She places both palms on Vlasák's shoulders and gazes intently into his eyes.*) Victor, was it not better this way?

Vlasák (*Confused*).—You are a demon, Helen!

Helen (*Laughs nervously*).—But you won't marry me, will you? I would not even want you to! I like you too well to pay for you so cheaply, if it doesn't have to be. (*Pats him with her fan.*) There, there, Viki—marry rich, make a career,—even if you have a wicked mother-in-law and good children— (*Bursts into a hysterical laugh.*)

Vlasák (*Abashed*).—Helen, every man is a rascal, isn't he?

Helen.—So they say! And happy the woman who doesn't find it out! (*Thoughtfully.*) Or are those happier who learn it in time? (*A pause.*) Indeed, what would I have had if I had married at twenty as Clara is doing now? I would now be a deceived wife, also. And possibly loveless, without feeling! (*Tossing her head.*) I am as I am! And if some one must suffer for all other men,— (*Ardently*) Victor, it must not be you!

Vlasák.—Helen, would you care to be my wife?

Helen (*Laughs harshly*).—Madman! Women like me don't marry. At least, not the men who know them—or else not until they are compromised before the world. (*In an ordinary tone.*) What a household that would be! (*Earnestly.*) And does my Victor think I would be faithful to him?

(VLASÁK *is silent.*)

Helen.—There, see! A relationship like ours, sweetheart, is something different from marriage.

Vlasák (*Embraces her, drawing her close to him*).—Helen!

Helen (*Fervently kisses him on the forehead*).—There—and now you have absolution! You were near to overflowing, just like Dušek. (*Laughs*) That Dušek, what a husband he would be! How he'd trust me!

Vlasák.—But—Helen, dear!

Helen (*Laughing*).—You don't think—? Victor! But I like him, truly. Such an exotic perfume of our social set! (*Mischievously.*) And after all——perhaps it might even be a happy marriage. A worn out generation, my friend, occasionally needs a little fresh blood in its veins.

Vlasák.—Dušek didn't live otherwise in his former life, I know that!

Helen.—Then it's the change of air. In our atmosphere

his virtue waxes remarkably. (*In her ordinary tone.*) We mustn't frighten him till he's run the whole gauntlet.

Vlasák (*Bitterly*).—Helen, we have nothing to rebuke each other with.

Helen (*Recovering*).—At our very souls' foundation, not a thing.

Vlasák (*After a pause, in low ardent tones*).—Helen, love, do you remember what you promised me the last time? (*Whispering.*) Tomorrow is Thursday.

Helen (*Shaking her head*).—No more!

Vlasák (*Reproachfully*).—Helen! On account of Dušek?

Helen (*Laughs. Then with greater earnestness*).—On account of some one else!

(*Music behind the scenes.*)

Vlasák.—Don't torture me, Helen! Am I to blame that you pity—Dušek?

Helen (*Ruffling his hair*).—Don't you know what we just said to each other? That we are both alike——

Vlasák (*Embraces her*).—Will you come tomorrow?

Helen (*Gently nods her head*).—At six. (*Walks quickly into the other room.*)

Curtain.

ACT III

DR. VLASÁK'S *apartments, which have very simple but tasteful appointments. In the rear are two doors, one leading to the vestibule and the other, at the right of the first, leading to the bedroom. At the left is a window near which is a writing desk. At the right against the wall is a divan and near it a small table. In the left corner a stove, near the rear between the doors is a case of books. There is very little other furniture, in the room. The room is dusky and later becomes completely dark.*

A maid kneels near the stove kindling the fire. She coughs at intervals. Near her on the floor stands a lighted candle. In the front hall the clicking of the lock is heard.

Vlasák (*Enters, wearing an overcoat covered with snow. His collar is turned up. On his head, a tall silk hat.*) Are you just making a fire, Mrs. Šebesta? (*Turns around.*) Come in, Fořt, I'll light the lamp in a minute.

(FOŘT *enters, covered with snow.*)

Servant.—God grant you good evening, gracious master! I couldn't come earlier. My daughter came late from school and I didn't want to leave the baby at home without any one to look after it. I'll be through in a minute.

Vlasák (*To* FOŘT).—Just lay off your things, Fořt. I'm sorry I have to lead you into a dark room.

Fořt.—I'll bring in a fine mess. Allow me to hang my overcoat in the vestibule if there is a hook there. (*Goes out of room.*)

Vlasák.—Light the way for him, Mrs. Šebesta.

(*Follows* FOŘT *into vestibule.*)

(*Servant goes towards vestibule holding the candle aloft.*)

Vlasák (*Returns without his overcoat. Breathes into his numbed hands*). Thunder! Such weather! And here it's no better.

(FOŘT *returning minus his overcoat.*)

Servant.—Shall I make a light, gracious master?

Vlasák.—Light up!

(SERVANT *goes to writing desk and lights lamp there. A light is cast around the table but otherwise the room is in semi-darkness.*)

Vlasák.—Was any one here? (*Draws down the curtain.*)

Servant.—Some gentleman, just as I came to build the fire. He said that he'd come again, for it was something important, he said.

Vlasák (*Thoughtfully*).—I wonder who it could have been?

(SERVANT *again stirring in the stove, and blowing at the fire. Coughs violently.*)

Vlasák.—There, Mrs. Šebesta—(*Turning to* FOŘT.) Sit down Fořt and excuse me just a minute.— (*To the servant.*) And hurry up, Mrs. Šebesta, build a fire in the bedroom, too, so that you wouldn't have to come back here again. And make a *big* fire, understand?

Servant.—So soon, gracious master?—I'll have to go get some coal, then, for I used up the last for this stove.

Vlasák.—Is it all gone again? (*Puts his hand into his pocket.*) Well, hurry then—here is a crown. (*Hands her the money.*)

Servant.—The coal dealer who used to be in this building has moved out. I'll have to go clear over to Carmelite Street. (*Closes the stove door, takes the lighted candle, standing beside the stove and goes to the bedroom.*)

Vlasák.—If you had come a little later, Fořt, you wouldn't have found me at home. I have to go away soon.

Fořt.—I'm in a hurry, too. I want to be at the Imperial by six.

Vlasák.—So you'd like to see my apartments? You can hire them next May. I will move to the other side of the river. (*Goes to the door of the bedroom.*)—Come! (*He opens the door and looks within.*) What, are you here, yet?

Servant (*In the bedroom*).—I'll just scrape out these ashes and I'll go right away.

Vlasák.—Well, you didn't have to do it just this minute! (*Turns around to* FOŘT). Well, look in and see how you like it. (*Entering bedroom.*)

(FOŘT *follows* VLASÁK.)

Vlasák (*Within the bedroom*).—Here's where I sleep. There is a separate entrance from the vestibule. (*A pause.*)

Fořt (*Enters a little later from the vestibule*).—What do you pay?

Vlasák (*Entering after him*).—Two hundred.

Fořt.—Well, that's cheap enough. To be sure, here on the Jansky summit——

Vlasák.—But the quiet is a compensation and you can study well here.

Fořt (*Naïvely*).—It isn't a matter of study only; but I'll be secure here. (*Laughs.*) Well, doctor, you know what you're about by having these apartments while you're a single man.

Vlasák (*Somewhat surprised*).—Why? (*Becomes calm again.*) Ah so! You are looking for a quiet place *not only* for study.

Fořt (*Laughing egotistically*).—For study of *women*, doctor.

Vlasák (*Laughs*).—You, you!

Fořt (*Ingenuously*).—And you didn't manage to get the good out of these excellent apartments?

Vlasák (*Considering* FOŘT'S *artlessness*).—Ah, I say, *Fořt*! (*A pause.*) Do you want the apartments?

Fořt.—I should say so! A separate entrance to each room, all under one lock and key——

Vlasák.—The landlord lives up over me on the second floor. Day after tomorrow I pay the rent and so I'll give warning.

Fořt.—I say, won't you please rent the apartments for me right on the spot? I'll make a deposit on the rooms after the first.

(SERVANT *steps out of the bedroom and having extinguished the candle which she carries, places it on the table.*)

Vlasák (*Impatiently*).—Hurry up, Mrs. Šebesta! Do you

hear? (*Looks at his watch.*)

Servant.—In a quarter of an hour I'll be back. (*Goes towards vestibule.*)

Vlasák (*Calls to her*).—See that you don't stop anywhere on the way!

Fořt (*In the meantime remains standing near the writing desk from which he takes a photograph at which he is now gazing*).—Well, I declare, Miss Lindner!

Vlasák (*Hastily*).—Yes, yes! Fine photograph, isn't it?

Fořt (*Stupidly*).—I also asked her for a photograph—but there wasn't any chance!

Vlasák (*Forcing a laugh*).—Oh, everyone hasn't that much luck!

Fořt (*Laughing*).—You, you!

Servant (*In the vestibule*).—He's at home, yes. He just arrived. (*Talking outside.*) My gracious master, that gentleman is here.

Vlasák (*Angrily*).—Haven't you gone yet? (*With great impatience*) Lord! (*Startled.*) Who's here?

Dušek (*Enters, wearing an elegant winter overcoat, snow-covered*) Am I interrupting?

Vlasák (*With forced agreeableness*).—Oh, is it you? How do you do?

Fořt.—Ah, the Maestro Dušek? What do you want here?

Dušek (*Disagreeably surprised at* FOŘT'S *presence*).—Ah, the doctor has a caller!

Fořt.—I'm going—I'm going! You have secrets with the doctor? A patron, eh?

Dušek (*Laughs*).—Of course!

Fořt.—Well, nine months ago. . . (*Observes* DUŠEK'S *displeasure*).—Well, I'm off—I'm off. Your servant doctor; don't forget to tell the landlord. Good luck, Dušek, good luck to you! (*Departs.*)

(VLASÁK *accompanies him.*)

(DUŠEK *in the meantime divests himself of his overcoat, removes a white handkerchief from around his throat and arranges all together with his hat, on the divan.*)

Vlasák (*Returns*).—You must pardon me, Mr. Dušek, for hastening so. . . I am to be in Smichov by six.

Dušek.—Oh, I've come at the wrong time, then? Pardon me, if I had known . . . But I would so much like to talk with you!

Vlasák (*Looks at his watch with apparent uneasiness*).—It is just forty minutes after five——

Dušek.—But, if I am detaining you——

(VLASÁK *in his excitement does not catch his words.*)

Dušek.—It isn't anything pressing, at least, for you, sir—

Vlasák (*Suddenly*).—Oh, I pray—that's all right! I have to wait for the servant, anyway.

Dušek.—But I wouldn't like to——

Vlasák (*Again looks at his watch and becomes absorbed in thought. Suddenly after having glanced involuntarily towards the door of the bedroom*).—Just stay, Mr. Dušek. (*Seats himself at the writing desk and motions to him to take a nearby seat.*) Have a seat.

Dušek (*Seats himself. His manner is hesitating*).—Now, I don't know how to begin. We were, yesterday evening, my dear doctor, at Mrs. Heller's——

Vlasák (*Rises*).—Wait, didn't some one ring?

Dušek.—No, I didn't hear anything.

Vlasák (*Listening*).—I must have imagined it. (*Seats himself again*). Go on!

Dušek (*Begins anew*).—For that matter, doctor, I don't believe I need to—(*Suddenly*) What's the use of any beating about the bush? I'll tell you openly why I've come to you.

(VLASÁK *impatiently twisting in his chair.*)

Dušek.—Undoubtedly you know that a great change has come into my life. Ever since I've known Miss Lindner——

Vlasák (*Laughs nervously*).—Ah, that's the reason!

Dušek (*More joyfully*).—Oh, you already know? Doctor, I've wronged you. (*Abruptly*) That is, I beg your pardon,—wronged!—I express myself stupidly. But it was said, you know, that you were—courting—Miss Lindner.

Vlasák (*With twitching lips*).—To be sure—it would be strange indeed if gossips wouldn't dish up some such report! (*Hesitates.*)

Dušek.—And so I was involuntarily prejudiced against you.—Forgive me! But, that isn't the question. Last evening I experienced two great joys; the first when I heard of your engagement to Miss Daneš——

Vlasák (*Hastily*).—Oh, no, no—we are not engaged yet!

Dušek.—Then, that you had been paying court only to her. But that is really only the preface to the reason for my coming here. Yesterday, I finally took courage—

Vlasák (*Again looks at his watch expectantly and rises.*)—Pardon me, Mr. Dušek! I am awaiting the servant, I sent her for some coal. . . . (*Walks across room.*) Confound that woman!

Dušek (*Arises*).—I've come inopportunely, I see.

Vlasák (*Lightly presses his arms as if to make him seat himself.*)—Please go on talking! And don't take my restlessness in bad part; I ought to be gone and that old woman——

Dušek (*With a smile*).—The state of single blessedness is beginning to torture you, too, is it?

Vlasák.—I should say so! (*Laughs impatiently.*) If you have the bachelor's joys I have, just hurry up and marry.

Dušek (*Embarrassed*).—That's easy to say! (*Sighs.*) Ah, good Heavens! (*A pause.*) Doctor, I must finish telling you.

Vlasák (*Seats himself*).—Please go on.

Dušek (*Laughs*).—We are a funny lot, aren't we, when we're in love?

Vlasák (*With growing wonder*).—Allow me, Mr. Dušek, tell me exactly what I have to do with that matter——

Dušek.—You are a family friend in the home of Mrs. Heller. Also of the Lindners'. You are a man of their social circle who understands and can do a lot more than, for instance, I, such—(*Considering*)—well—such a parvenu!

Vlasák (*Astonished*).—Do you want to pay court to Miss Lindner?

Dušek (*Startled by the words*).—You utter the words more quickly, doctor, than I dare to think them.

Vlasák (*Inquisitively*).—And what about Miss Lindner?

Dušek (*Blissfully*).—Oh, as far as she's concerned! But her family, her relatives——

Vlasák (*Surprised*).—Ah, so it's only the relatives you now fear! (*Blurts out.*) So that's it, is it? (*Abruptly.*) And I am, then, to be a diplomat?

Dušek.—Not at all, doctor, but, in the meantime, just my friend. I would wish very much to regard you thus.

(VLASÁK *bows silently.*)

Dušek.—I've been thinking about it very seriously today, in fact, all night long. (*Frankly*) Why, I never closed my eyes for very joy! And it occurred to me—(*A bell sounds in the vestibule.*)

Vlasák (*Rises quickly. Greatly disquieted*).—Excuse me, Mr. Dušek. . . .

Dušek (*Does not rise*).—Please go ahead! I'll wait.

Vlasák (*With growing restlessness*).—Forgive me, Mr. Dušek, but it's high time I was going.

Dušek.—Good, we'll go together and I'll tell you on the way. (*Rising.*)

Vlasák (*In impatient embarrassment*).—That is—no . . . I'll have to stay here after all. (*The bell rings again, this time more loudly.*) Please, allow me——

Dušek (*Who has, in the meantime, put on his coat, now grasps his hat*).—I won't detain you any longer. (*Offers his hand to* VLASÁK *and is ready to go.*)

Vlasák (*Steps in front of him*).—Allow me—I'll open the door.

Dušek.—I'll call on you tomorrow, may I? (*Steps towards door.*)

Vlasák (*In great excitement*).—But, I beg, that you wait a moment! (*Points to chair.*) Please wait an instant till I see who it is. (*The bell rings again.*) Excuse me! (*Departs and closes behind him the door that leads to the vestibule.*)

(DUŠEK *stands surprised in the middle of the room, not understanding* VLASÁK'S *excitement. Steps to the door of the vestibule then draws back and goes to the writing desk, shaking his head. He suddenly notices Helen's photograph on the table, seizes it in amazement, and absorbed in thought, stands gazing at it. Then he lays it aside and walks across the room.*)

Vlasák (*Enters showing excitement*).—It was the servant, at last! (*Quickly*). So, Mr. Dušek, pardon me, and tomorrow—we'll meet again! Will you be in your studio in the morning?

(DUŠEK *nods assent stiffly.*)

Vlasák.—I'll call on you, then, to save you the trouble of coming here. (*Quickly.*) Oh, that's all right, all right! (*Takes the lamp and accompanies him to vestibule.*) At your service, Dušek, and don't be angry at me! (*They depart. It is wholly dark in the room. In a little while* VLASÁK *returns and sets the lamp on the writing desk. The stage becomes a little lighter at the left side from the rays of the lamp.* VLASÁK, *after setting down the lamp, goes to the door of the bedroom and opening it, speaks to some one within, with a sigh of deep relief.*) Thank heaven, I've gotten him out of the way!

Helen (*In a simple dress—without her cloak which she has cast off in the bedroom, enters, drawing deep breaths—loosening, meanwhile, a black silk shawl on her head. Harshly.*)—What did

he want here? What if I had met him on the stairs?

Vlasák (*Likewise excited*).—That's why I had to detain him here until you came. (*Notices* HELEN. *Tenderly*) Helen, darling, you're all a-tremble!

Helen (*Sighs*).—There isn't any wonder! The very journey —from the bridge here—and the fright—when I knew you were not at home alone! (*She draws the shawl from her head to her shoulders.*)

Vlasák.—Come, sit down. —You are shaking! (*Leads her to the divan where the light is very dim.*) Shall I put the lamp here?

Helen (*Seating herself*).—No, thank you, no, the light bothers my eyes. (*A pause.*) Come, Viki, sit by me! (*Laughs.*) So, you're a diplomat! I came near finding Dušek here instead of you. (*She ruffles his hair.*)

Vlasák.—I couldn't help it, really. He came—I couldn't deny myself to him . . . What a terrible man! (*Sighs and then laughs.*) Do you know Helen, love, what he wanted? That I should speak a good word for him—to your father!

Helen (*Softly*).—The fool!

Vlasák.—No one but a man in love could become such an idiot! (*Abruptly.*) Apropos, Helen, what did you promise Dušek yesterday?

Helen (*Amazed*).—I?

Vlasák.—From his talk, I gathered that he is wholly convinced of your love. Did you say something to him?

Helen (*Bursts out in wicked laughter*).—Didn't he say, also, that on my bended knees, I implored him to marry me? What does that man think?

Vlasák.—Haven't I told you repeatedly to get rid of him at one stroke? He is becoming more and more inconvenient. Tell him once for all—"I'll take you!" or "I won't have you!" "Your wooing is agreeable," or not—in short, one way or other—so that the affair would come to an end!

Helen (*Absorbed in thought*).—Ah, it will all end, anyway. . . (*Tosses her head.*) Victor, Dušek has never been an obstacle to *you*! (*A pause.*)

Vlasák (*Embraces her and slowly lifts her from the divan*).—Helen, darling——

Helen (*Arising independently and crossing the room*).—Sweetheart, I want to talk seriously with you today. (*Smiles.*) Yes, seriously! (*Seats herself at the writing desk and indicates a*

nearby chair. With a smile adds.) Please sit. Make yourself at home!

Vlasák (*With one arm about her waist, reaches with other for lamp*).—Look, Helen, my love——

Helen (*Lightly slips out of his embrace*).—Pst! (*Seats herself again.*) Who knows when we shall again meet this way? Perhaps, never again!

Vlasák (*Reproachfully*).—Helen!

Helen.—Victor, let's speak frankly! We have absolutely nothing to reproach each other with; for we made no promises to each other. You were not drawn to me through pure love—

(VLASÁK *moves and tries to speak.*)

Helen (*Undisturbedly*).—I say that you didn't draw me to yourself through love, through passion. (*She laughs bitterly.*) And I surrendered not otherwise! And I wanted you just as I want a new maid or a trip to Misdroy in the summertime. Yes!—And you—hush, Viki, hush! you desired me in the same wanton fashion! Was it your first affair?

(VLASÁK *is silent.*)

Helen (*Tosses her head*).—And it wasn't your last, either! Even though you'll marry now. No, don't play a part, Victor! If you didn't believe, what you'd like so well to deny now, I wouldn't be in your apartments now when Prague is talking about your engagement to Clara Daneš. And I tell you myself, "Marry," because I know that I'll not be your wife and may not be. And because I know that I'll have you even afterwards—or as long as I don't weary you or—you me!

Vlasák.—Helen, love of mine, you are unkind!

Helen (*Carelessly*).—Don't pretend! I didn't come to enact a farce, with tear-dimmed eyes and a category of your sins. And I also know it's neither the first nor the last time I'll come. If, however, I'd say to you now, "I'll marry Dušek—" (*She tosses her head.*) Or for that matter—not particularly Dušek, any other man—even that stupid Fořt. If I said that, do you know what you must do Victor? You must open the door, escort me forth—and never breathe a word! Just as I have said to you, "Go, marry Clara, if you wish!" We have belonged to each other only for a while and we have paid for each other with our passion, as others pay with money!

(VLASÁK *buries his head in his hands.*)

Helen.—Our particular system of society is a market place with only a few mediums of barter. And many fine ladies are

rich enough to pay for their lovers in cash. (*Laughs harshly.*) But our accounts are also settled aren't they, Victor? (*Rising.*) And what was before or what will be later, we don't have to know!

(VICTOR *shows disturbance.*)

Helen (*Lays her hand on* VLASÁK'S *shoulder*).—Victor, I don't believe a soul in our world—and those of them who are not fools, don't believe us either. But they wouldn't forgive us if they knew. Well then, not for their sakes but for our own, we'll both lie about this. Society would laugh a guffaw at you if you entered matrimony pure as you men demand women to be—and society will loudly defame you if you oppose its pharisaism. I am too independent not to demand the same right for myself. Our society, my friend, permits only a *man* to live his youth unburdened by thoughts of his future wife. But it gives this permission only *silently*. I demand this same right for myself, although I don't wish to be enslaved by the public opinion of those hypocrites. That is why I have been yours to control—in your arms—(*In bitter mood*) and that's why in society I'm always such—a desirable match.

(VLASÁK *moves.*)

Helen (*Quickly*).—Well, I'm not a rich match—as yet,—but at least I'm a woman who hasn't compromised herself.

Vlasák (*Seizes her hand*).—Helen, you are far better than I! You are deeper, more sincere!

Helen.—At any rate, I have some principles, you mean? In my sinfulness, there is, at least, a system! (*She laughs bitterly.*)

Vlasák.—And why, Helen—(*A long pause.*) Why, Helen dear, do you tell me those things just at this time? In these few moments, of which we are defrauding ourselves by grave and severe discussions? (*Rising.*) Helen, don't torture me! (*Passionately.*) Before we know it, you will have to leave! (*Seizes her head and draws her to himself.*)

Helen.—Do you know what I said at the beginning? The world isn't as truthful as we are at this moment. Before the time comes when love or something else casts you into the arms of another woman, we must tell each other all,—Victor,—all! (*She stands erect and draws a deep breath.*) And I didn't want you *not* to know why I do not regret that love. (*With a fascinating smile.*) And now, since you know. . . .

Vlasák (*Madly embracing her*).—Helen!

Helen (*Withdraws from his embrace after a little while*).—

There's something else, Victor! (*Seizes his hand.*) I thank you for never compromising me by even a word or look, during the whole time. (*Hastily.*) No, no, don't be modest! It's beyond most men. Our future life is altogether too long and our taste too accustomed to the pleasures of our present surroundings to lightly throw away our reputations even be they undeservedly good. It is our good fortune, Victor! If we had not played our comedy so well, do you know what would have happened?

Vlasák (*Softly*).—Yes, I know, Helen!

Helen.—You would have had to be *more* than my lover. Our love would not end here (*pointing towards the sleeping room.*) but at the altar! (*With a bewitching gesture of warning.*) Remember that, Victor!

(VLASÁK *silently embraces her.*)

Helen (*Bursts out laughing suddenly*).—I've given you a fine sermon, haven't I? (*Taking his chin into her hand.*) Viki, Viki, do you recognize me? I tell you, I also at times—(*Becoming grave*) think seriously! (*Puts her hand on her forehead.*) Oh, Lord, Lord!

Vlasák (*Laughing*).—I never in my life would have thought that I'd hear so much truth. And last of all from my Helen! And, at that, just in this place!

Helen (*In her ordinary tone*).—Am I not good for coming? If only you knew, Victor, what a time I had getting here today! I drove with Aunt to the concert at the Rudolfinum*, I purposely accompanied her right to the concert—and then came here over the chain bridge.

Vlasák (*Frightened*).—You came on foot, Helen? How can you be so imprudent?

Helen.—How was I to get a carriage near the Rudolfinum and avoid being observed? I couldn't, of course, take Aunt's carriage over here. And the streets of Small Side† are usually so desolate. I was so thickly veiled that even an acquaintance wouldn't recognize me.

Vlasák.—You think so?

Helen.—And for that matter, no acquaintances of mine pass this way. On the chain bridge I met that artist—you know, that——

*The main concert and art hall of Prague named after Rudolph II., emperor of Hungary 1572 and king of Bohemia from 1575 to his death in 1612. He was a patron of arts and sciences. Tycho Brahe, Kepler, Zed-Hajek and other scientists were his special guests and favorites.

†Small Side. A portion of Prague just across the river from the Old Town.

Vlasák (*Quickly*).—Surely not Dušek?

Helen.—Oh, no! That other one—Hlaváček.

Vlasák (*With great anxiety*).—Did he recognize you?

Helen.—To be sure not! He would surely have greeted me. But he didn't give a sign.

Vlasák.—Don't do such things, Helen!

Helen.—Well, it's the first time it ever happened.

Vlasák (*Shakes his finger threateningly*).—And the last!

Helen.—Why, did I do it so clumsily? (*Draws her watch from the bosom of her dress and looks at it.*) Viki, it is almost half past six! At eight the concert will be over—and if Aunt should stop at home and I were not there yet——

Vlasák.—What did you tell her?

Helen.—I told her that I'd go home in her carriage——

Vlasák.—But at home?

Helen (*Carelessly*).—Nothing.

(*A bell sounds in the vestibule.*)

Vlasák (*Frightened*).—Who is that?

Helen (*In a low voice*).—Don't open.

Vlasák (*Also in a low voice*).—Who can it be? It surely wouldn't occur to anyone that I'm at home!

Helen.—We won't make a sound.

Vlasák.—Pst! Don't talk! (*They seat themselves at the table.*)

Helen (*Whispering*).—Does anyone come here in the evenings?

Vlasák (*Whispering*).—Never. I am never at home in the evenings.

Helen.—Who can it be, then?

(*A renewed ringing.*

Vlasák (*Shaking his finger*).—Let them ring!

Helen (*Much alarmed, whispering*).—He must have seen that light in the window.

Vlasák (*Looks towards the window*).—The curtain is drawn.

Helen—But perhaps, even through the curtain——

Vlasák.—Pst! (*A violent, prolonged ringing.*)

Helen.—He surely noticed the light.

Vlasák (*Suddenly*).—The servant! (*Whispers.*) She was to come back to build a fire, she went for coal—and the key is in the door. (*The bell is rung more vehemently.*)

Helen.—Go and open the door for her.

Vlasák.—And what if it isn't she?

Helen (*Goes towards the bedroom*).—I will hide in the bedroom.

Vlasák.—That's where she's going to build a fire. Stay here. (*A renewed, wild ringing.*)

Helen (*Excited*).—Hurry! Whoever it is knows you're at home—open!

Vlasák (*Decisively*).—Stay here. And if I don't say in a loud voice. "So you've returned, Mrs. Šebesta?" go at once into the bedroom.

Helen.—All right! Quickly!

Vlasák (*Takes the lamp and departs, indicating meanwhile to* HELEN *to be absolutely quiet.*)

(HELEN *nods assent and steps close to the book-case near the door of the bedroom.*)

Vlasák (*Enters the vestibule. The stage is in complete darkness.* VLASÁK *outside is heard opening the door and then cries out in amazement*).—Ah! (*In a loud voice.*) Is that you, Mr. Dušek?

(HELEN *trembles.*)

Vlasák (*Outside*).—I am about to go, also——

(HELEN *steps toward the bedroom.*)

Dušek (*Enters the room talking towards rear*).—I just had to return, doctor.

(HELEN *disappears into the bedroom.*)

Vlasák (*Enters with the lamp in his hand, behind* DUŠEK.)—Is it so urgent? (*Looking about.*) Sit down here, please! (*Indicates a chair near the table on which he sets lamp.*)

Dušek (*Shakes the snow from his overcoat with a violent motion, throws off his hat and speaks rapidly without seating himself*).—Dr. Vlasák, why didn't you go away with me at once!

Vlasák (*Grasping that* DUŠEK *knows about* HELEN, *boldly retorts*).—But, by what right——

Dušek (*Explosively*).—By what right? (*Pauses, listening.*) I'll very soon tell you that. (*Abruptly*) Pardon me! (*Leaps quickly towards entrance to vestibule and having opened the door stands on the threshold partly turned towards the room and partly towards the vestibule.*)

Vlasák (*Comprehending his intention, furiously*).—Have you gone mad, man? (*Seizing him by the hand he draws him away from the door.*) What do you want, speak!

Dušek (*Again runs to the door*).—I'll tell you at once, but from *here*!

Vlasák (*Raging*).—Insolent fellow! (*Seizes him again and drags him into the room.*) Don't you yet see what you are doing in my apartments?

Dušek (*Frees himself from* VLASÁK's *hold*).—I'll answer for it but not to *you.* (*Suddenly, hearing a rustle in the vestibule.*) Aha! (*Jumps to the door of the vestibule flings it wide open and screams into the darkness.*) Who is here? (*A pause.*) No one? Oho! (*Runs into vestibule.*)

Vlasák (*Behind him*).—I'll kill you, you blackguard!

Dušek (*In the vestibule*).—Shut up! (*Throws* VLASÁK *bodily into the room. In a moment he bursts in himself dragging by the hand the resisting figure of* HELEN *enveloped in a cloak with a shawl on her head. In the light he looks into her face.*) Miss He—(*Groans. In a broken voice.*) Really? (*Lets go of* HELEN's *hand and sinking into a chair, drops his head into his hands.*)

(HELEN *erect and pale at the door.*)

Vlasák (*Glances at* HELEN *then throws himself upon* DUŠEK.)—Villain!—(*Wants to throw him.*)

Helen (*Holding him back*).—Hush, doctor! (*Seeking to control herself.*) Ask this gentleman to leave at once! (*Draws the shawl from her head and loosens the cape.*)

Dušek (*Gazing at her, with a smile of suffering*).—You are right, Miss Lindner—I can go now! I have convinced myself of that which even a moment ago seemed to me the most shameful lie. (*Rising.*) And if you wish, I will also even forgive. (*Starts to go.*)

Helen (*Abruptly, in a commanding tone*).—Wait! I don't want you to go away with the notion that I have robbed you of something. You are probably vain enough for that! If either one of us is to forgive anything, (*Haughtily*) it is I! Your vanity and also your crudeness—(*Laughs disdainfully*) and likewise your baseness in spying on me within a few hours after the moment when you pleaded for my love! (*Commandingly pointing to the door.*) And now go!

Dušek (*Utterly undone*).—Miss—Lind—ner——(*Clasps his hands.*) At least, don't believe that I *spied* on you!

Helen (*With contempt*).—Go, hypocrite!

Vlasák (*Scornfully*).—Mr. Dušek, there is the door!

Dušek (*Made furious by his words*).—You—keep still! (*Tossing his head.*) But no—even you shall know all! A while ago when here, here—(*Points towards writing desk*) I opened my whole heart to you, you still had the right to cry me down. You might have called me a madman or a fool—as you wished!—if there had been one drop of honesty in your make-up. You could have spat in my face when I avowed my love for Miss

Lindner. And you should have struck me in the face as a liar when I said that I believed Miss Lindner had some regard for me!

(HELEN *proudly measures* DUŠEK.)

Dušek (*Continuing*).—But you, you—you fairly gave me your blessing when I confessed to you. (*Reaches for* HELEN'S *photograph on the writing desk.*) This photograph as well as your impatience might have aroused my suspicion—but I, fool, believed, believed,—even at leaving, I thanked you! In the very moment, Miss Lindner— (*Turning to* HELEN) when you were already in the next room! And I went down the stairs from here—happy, rejoiced——

Vlasák (*Bursts out*).—Don't lie, you sneak!

Dušek (*Undisturbed*).—And how absolutely I believed in you, Miss Lindner! When on the corner here, I met a man who saw you entering here——

Helen (*Haughtily*).—You ought to be ashamed to add lies!

Dušek (*Bursting out*).—Do you know who it was? A man in return for whose friendship I have given only kicks!——

Helen (*Involuntarily*).—Hlaváček!

Dušek (*Laughing wildly*).—Yes, Hlaváček! And he had to drive me in here, yes, fairly drag me by force clear up to the door, although everything convicted you! Even the moment when I was departing, the light in the windows, and the eternity during which I rang the bell so furiously! (*Clasps his hands.*) God! God! God!

Vlasák (*Goes to the door and commandingly indicates it*).—Mr. Dušek—!

Helen (*More calmly*).—Go, Mr. Dušek! (*Dryly.*) But know this before you leave—you haven't the right to defame me. And if you think I have broken your heart—well, you have done the same before this to other women. And you had no right to do it! As far as morality goes, I stand as well as you. (*Turns away.*) Good-bye!

Dušek (*Desperately*).—Miss Helen! (*Approaches her.*)

Helen (*Evading him*).—Go, please!

Vlasák (*At the door*).—Don't you hear?

(DUŠEK *stands erect, shivers and then, brokenly, departs into the vestibule. Outside the door closes after him. A long pause.*)

Helen (*Shivers and sinks in a heap on the divan pressing her head into her hands*).—Oh! Oh! Oh!

Vlasák (*Stands a while undecidedly in the middle of the room.*

Suddenly he advances towards HELEN).—Helen, forgive me!

Helen (*Rising*).—Is it going to begin all over again? (*Points to the door.*) I hope, that *now* we needn't act the farce any longer.

Vlasák (*Frightened*).—For God's sake, Helen——

Helen (*With icy calmness*).—Did you hear? And you know what I told you a moment ago?

((VLASÁK *surprisedly shakes his head.*)

Helen (*Sorrowfully*).—Just recall! Without your or my fault everything has suddenly changed. (*Takes his head between her hands and looks into his eyes.*) Poor fellow! Poor fellow!

Vlasák (*Not comprehending*).—No, Helen,—*you* are the one needing pity! I am to blame and *you* are the one sacrificed!

Helen (*Wondering*).—Only I? And not you? (*Violently seizes his hand.*)—What will you do now, Victor?

Vlasák (*Crushed*).—I don't know—

Helen (*Surprised*).—You don't know? Now, at this moment, you don't know? At this moment when perhaps even the street-arabs are running about Prague saying——

Vlasák.—Helen!

Helen.—Yes, when in a little while the scandal will be the topic of discussion in every coffee-house and restaurant in the city? And you don't know?

Vlasák (*In hollow tones*).—I know, Helen.

Helen (*Icily*).—Have you asked for Clara's hand?

(VLASÁK *shakes his head.*)

Helen.—Are you otherwise bound to her?

(VLASÁK *remains silent.*)

Helen (*Harshly*).—Aren't you?

(VLASÁK *again shakes his head.*)

Helen (*Slowly but firmly*).—And when do you wish to speak to *my* father?

Vlasák (*Frightened at the word but quickly recovers*).—When you wish.

Helen.—At once, tomorrow! (*A pause.*) Tomorrow, you understand? (*Looks at him.*) Do you want to?

Vlasák (*Resignedly*).—Yes!

Helen (*Gives him her hand*).—Thank you, Victor! (*Sinks on the divan.*) Poor boy! (*Glancing at* VLASÁK, *she buries her face in her hands.*)

Curtain.

ACT IV

The artists' atelier of the first act. HLAVÁČEK *and* ŠIMR *are now located here. Many things are changed and on the whole the studio is simpler in its appointments. The divan is still in the corner but minus the canopy. The screen near the side door is also missing. In the front near the left wall is a shelf with various small articles. Under it there hangs a large decorative plate. The pictures on the two easels are turned at right angles from the audience. In the center of the studio is a small table on which is a jardiniere with an azalea plant containing white blossoms. Near the window on a stand is a palm. Through the window the ruddy glow of the setting sun shines, coloring the white azalea blossoms a deep pink. Later the glow grows dimmer gradually until towards the close of the act, there is only a soft twilight. The freshness of a May evening is apparent.*

Hlaváček (*Seated at a smaller easel on which he is painting the azaleas placed not far away. While he works he whistles a merry Slovák tune. Having finished whistling a measure, he rises and views his sketch from a distance. Then he sits down again and paints. He hums the tune slowly again and gradually breaks into singing*).—

Oh, that's what you have for it all, Katrine
Oh, that's what you have, Kathie—
How oft I came to see you, love,
Beneath your little window!

(*He whistles again.*)

Dušek (*Enters meantime, slowly. The change in him is apparent. His hair and beard are unshaved and unkempt; his clothes of the latest cut to be sure, but uncared for. His cravat, though modish, twisted and carelessly tied. On his head a fashionable tall silk hat but it is unpressed and ruffled. His entire behavior is now timid, uncertain and almost frightened. He enters without removing his hat*).—At your service, Ládo!

Hlaváček (*Sees* DUŠEK, *stops whistling, throws away his palette and turns on his stool*).—Dušek! Well, I'm glad to see you again! (*Extends his hand.*) Most happy, old pal! (*Gazes at him.*) Man, what are you doing? Do you know that I haven't seen you since last winter?

Dušek (*Smiles bitterly*).—Yes, I know it. I haven't seen

you, either. (*Reproachfully*) Don't you know where I live?

Hlaváček.—Well, but are you ever at home? I always make a useless trip up to your attic, when I want to see you.

Dušek.—As if my studio weren't just around the corner!

Hlaváček.—And it's further from your place here than from mine to yours, eh?

Dušek.—Oh, well!—Anyway, it's all—(*Waves his hand*) why should I interrupt? (*A pause.*)

Hlaváček (*After a while*).—Are you painting?

Dušek (*Crossly*).—Painting—the devil! I've got a lot of inspiration to paint!

Hlavaáček.—Well, then, what are you doing?

Dušek (*Ill-humoredly*).—Nothing! (*A pause*) Have you a cigarette?

Hlaváček (*Inclines his head toward the little table*).—No, I haven't, but there's the tobacco, help yourself—

Dušek (*Goes to the table and rolls a cigarette. Then he stands behind* HLAVÁČEK).—For whom are you making this?

Hlaváček (*Bends backward and gazes at his sketch*).—Oh, this is only to fill in as a rest. I bought the azalea the other day and thought I'd try out some paints on them before they stop blooming. (*Looks intently at the azaleas.*) What a tone to them, isn't there? They look rose-colored when the sun shines on them.

Dušek.—Have you lots of work?

Hlaváček.—You know how it goes, something to do all the time. Weren't you at the Rudolfinum gallery?

(DUŠEK *shakes his head.*)

Hlaváček.—I have that last year's canvas on exhibition there, you remember it? The one on account of which you invoked maledictions on my head because I wasn't in a hurry about painting at it, "The Will o' the Wisp." Well, you see, brother, it's done.

Dušek (*Throws away the unfinished cigarette. Bitterly*).—Well, you see! (*A pause.*) Is Šimr with you now?

(HLAVÁČEK *nods.*)

Dušek.—And what is he doing?

Hlaváček.—Gadding around. But he has luck, the rascal. He sold his picture.

Dušek (*Timidly*).—A big one?

Hlaváček (*Laughing*).—Oh, a larger family size! (*Takes a good look at* DUŠEK.)—Well, Milo, how about it?

Dušek.—What?

Hlaváček.—How is your "Psyche" getting along?

Dušek (*Fretfully*).—Don't aggravate me! (*Goes to the window and looks out.*) Oh, Lord, Lord! (*Turns around.*) Do you know, Ládo, that it's a half year since I've been in this studio? (*Sorrowfully*) And I really shouldn't have come crawling up now!

Hlaváček.—Haven't you gotten any wisdom, yet, Kamilo?

Dušek (*Laughs mournfully*).—Nowhere to put it, old pal! Can't fill up with water a dish that's full of holes.

Hlaváček (*With warm open-heartedness*).—Now what! You're surely not going to make yourself miserable for ever!

Dušek (*Sadly*).—Ládo! Ládo! It's easy for you to talk!

Hlaváček.—If you weren't so hot-headed and would once in a while come among us, you wouldn't have to think so much of things you can't change.

Dušek.—Oh, no, no, no—I don't fit among you fellows any more. I'd just needlessly poison you all.

Hlaváček.—Such an idea! You must force yourself, then.

Dušek.—To work? Do you think I don't try? Work, if you can, when you feel as I've felt for three solid months.

Hlaváček.—First of all, come back among us to your own world, don't *think*, and do a few merry stunts with the boys—in a few days you'll be in first rate condition.

Dušek (*Impatiently*).—Oh, I say—please——(*A pause.* DUŠEK *seats himself on the divan. After a while.*) Ládo, tell me one thing.

(*Hlaváček.*—Well?

Dušek.—Did you tell that to anyone that time?

Hlaváček (*Not comprehending*).—What?

Dušek (*With impatience*).—You know, that evening—at Dr. Vlasák's——

Hlaváček (*Recalling*).—Oh, that? (*Earnestly.*)—Why, what do you think? We promised each other that we'd both keep still about it. Why, did someone—?

Dušek.—Doubtless I'm mistaken. But, they say, something was said not long ago at the coffee-house.

Hlaváček.—Who knows what you've heard!

Dušek.—And you know that—(*In a lower voice*) Miss Lindner is married?

Hlaváček (*Surprised*).—You don't say? After all?

Dušek (*Bitterly*).—She's married to Vlasák, didn't you hear about it? Yesterday, at the Dominican church, very quietly—

at six o'clock in the morning.—(*Maliciously*) Maybe they thought we published it that time throughout Prague! (*A pause.*)

Hlaváček.—Good enough for 'em—for both of them! (*Notices* DUŠEK.) I say, old man, you're not torturing yourself because they got married?

Dušek (*Haughtily*).—You fool!

Hlaváček.—What's gnawing at you, then?

Dušek.—Not for her, by any means—believe me, not for her! And after the worst desperation was over that time, I almost believed you—that it had all turned out for the best! But now! Look at me! (*Rises.*) Well?

Hlaváček.—Well—what?

Dušek.—Don't you see? (*A pause.*) Did you know that they returned my picture from the Rudolfinum?

Hlaváček (*Surprised*).—Wha-a-t? (*After a while.*) What did you send?

Dušek.—I finished that "Psyche." That is—I finished at it! They fairly threw it back at my feet. (*Bitterly.*) My "Psyche" you know. For two months I forced myself to paint at it to get a little calm out of my work. I began again and again, virtually fought with myself about the thought and the form, I wrung my brain and soul—and—nothing, nothing, nothing! (*Explosively.*) Bah! (*A pause.*) I'm not surprised at them for not wanting it. It was a terrible daub, worse than a chromo. (*Sadly.*) Ládo, you know I didn't use to be just an ordinary dauber, did I?

Hlaváček (*With genuine feeling*).—And you're not, you little idiot! What if you have made a mess of one thing? That's nothing! You slid out of the track last year, a little, and then you had a sudden awakening—well,—what of it? Buy yourself some canvas and paints, smear up something, come again among your old comrades—and you'll see—it will once more be a "go!"

Dušek (*Bitterly*).—As if I had even the price of the paints. (*Stops suddenly, after a while.*) But what made me come to you at all? That time in my anger I gave up the place—you recall that time? I thought by spring I'd get something together and disappear to Munich——

Hlaváček.—And today you have to move, is that it? It's the first?

Dušek.—Only that I have no place to move to. Tomorrow a new renter moves into my rooms——

Hlaváček.—An acquaintance?

head.) Oh, well, I'll manage somehow—(*Hesitates and looks around.*) Say, Ládo, you have some books haven't you?

Hlaváček (*With quick willingness*).—You want to read something? With great pleasure! I've thrown all the books into the trunk, I'd have to go hunt them——

Dušek.—Have you—Daudet's "Sappho?"

Hlaváček.—Why, you've read that already.

Dušek.—What of it, I want to read it again. Lend it to me, please.

Hlaváček.—Right away?

Dušek (*Quickly*).—I'd rather have it at once.

Hlaváček.—Well, come on then, we'll find it. (*Goes into the bedroom.*)

Dušek (*Goes after him but pauses on the threshold*).—But don't be angry.

Hlaváček (*Behind the scenes*).—Don't mention it!

Dušek (*Glances into the bedroom, then quickly walks away from the door, steps to the table and having pulled out the drawer takes the revolver, quickly thrusts it into his lower pocket and with a bound is back at the threshold of the bedroom. Excitedly he asks*).—Have you found it?

Hlaváček (*Behind the scenes*).—Wait, wait—aha, here it is! (*The trunk-lid is heard to fall behind the scenes.*)

Dušek.—Good, thank you!

Hlaváček (*Enters wiping the dust from the book on his trouser leg*).—Here is "Sappho"—and come and get something else when you're through reading it. At least bury yourself in books if you don't yet feel like painting.

Dušek (*Takes the book. His voice suddenly becomes softened and gentle*).—And there's something else, Ládo, don't be angry with me—I often did you injustice, didn't I? You know, last summer——

Hlaváček (*Pressing* DUŠEK'S *hand*).—Eh, don't even speak of it! Am I made of butter?

Dušek.—But I must say it. Well, then—thank you!

Hlaváček.—What for?

Dušek.—Oh, well, for—all sorts of things. (*Stands at the window.*) Look the sun has gone down. Prague is certainly beautiful! (*Breathes deeply and places his hand on his forehead.*) Oh, Lord, Lord! How many times I've gazed from here on lovely Prague, on the river and on Castle Hradčany! (*A pause.*) That isn't the truth even, any more! (*Sighs deeply. Suddenly*

and the second one punished me for that first one!

Hlaváček (*Shaking off the mood induced by* DUŠEK).—Thunderation, Dušek, cut out this sentiment business and get down to work! The devil took two girls and one picture that they turned back to you! If I were to torture myself this way on account of every woman——

Dušek.—It isn't the women, Ládo! I was caught in the abyss between two worlds. Each sprang back and I—descended. Don't you suppose that when the crash came—you know that time in the winter—that I didn't do my level best to get back to the world that had formerly disgusted me? I didn't go to the studio for a week, I hung around the taverns, I cut away the new roots joining me to the new life just as energetically as I had torn up those which bound me to the old. And when, after a week, I came back to my studio to the cold and the dust and the disorder, when I again seized my palette and wanted to begin—(*Bursts out*)—Ugh! (*Wearedly*) Well, you heard how it turned out with my "Psyche."

Hlaváček.—You began where you always falsely saw the peculiar life of the artist. Going to drinking taverns wasn't the road, my boy, that led back to us.

Dušek (*Provoked*).—Oh, I know! (*Crosses the studio gazing at the wall where a revolver hangs under the shelf.*) But the longer it lasts the more I'll get tangled up. (*Looks around at* HLAVÁČEK *to see if he is observed.*) I'm an object fit only for under the earth anyway. (*Reaches for the revolver.*) Look! This would fix things most easily!

Hlaváček (*Noticing that* DUŠEK *has taken down the revolver, springs forward quickly*).—Silly madman! (*Jerks the revolver out of his hand and stepping up to the table, tosses it into a drawer.*) You didn't give it to me last year to be haunted by it now! (*Forces himself to be jocular.*) No, my boy, this isn't for shooting purposes. Unless I should happen to shoot it off myself before I went to the pawnshop. (*A pause.*) Sit down and let's talk.

Dušek (*Nervously*).—Are you going to stay at home? I'd go with you if you'd want——

Hlaváček.—Wait! We're celebrating May Day today, you know—in the fashion on Střelák! The boys will come and Šimr has gone to bring in Réza and Bozena.

Dušek (*Quickly*).—No, no, no. I'm afraid of people and especially of the boys. (*Resignedly.*) I ran away from our own world—and they've kicked me out of the other one! (*Tosses his*

Dušek.—Don't mock at me, Šimr!

Šimr (*Shrugs his shoulders*).—Hm! (*Turns away.*) By Jove, Dušek, I owe you a gold piece, yet, do you know it! (*Reaches into pocket.*)

Dušek (*Surprised*).—You owe *me*?

Šimr.—For nearly a year—don't you remember? (*Gives* DUŠEK *the coin.*) Plenty of money, old chap! (*To the models.*) Haven't I, girls?

Réza (*Laughs*).—You'll blow it to the winds in a hurry.

Dušek (*Puts the coin in his pocket*).—Thanks!

Šimr.—That is to say—*I* thank *you*!

Hlaváček (*To* ŠIMR).—Haven't you seen Paroubek?

Šimr.—He's at the Slavia, he'll be here soon. Malina also. (*Reaches into his pocket.*) Here are the provisions! (*Places a package on the table.*) Look, Dušek, you must learn to live this way again. For forty kreutzers a side of bacon, a few wieners——

Hlaváček (*Unwraps package*).—For forty! Thunder! That won't be enough!

Šimr (*Looking around with a mischievous grin*).—But they threw in the advice not to eat anything from the dealers in smoked meat——

Hlaváček (*Springs up*).—I'll give you a good— (*Stretches out his hand as if to slap* ŠIMR.)

Dušek (*Impatiently*).—Good-bye, Láda! (*Extends his hand.*)

Šimr (*To* DUŠEK).—Man, alive, how you look! If I were a landscape artist, I'd use you as a model for a ruin!

(*The models burst out in noisy laughter.*)

Dušek (*Hurt by the jibe quickly draws his hat down on his forehead*).—Good-bye, Šimr.

Hlaváček.—Won't you wait?

Dušek (*Impatiently*).—No, no, no!

Šimr.—You're a queer one! To get wrathy for a word! Good luck to you! (*Offers his hand.*)

Dušek (*Having extended his hand, indifferently, to* Šimr, *again offers his hand to* HLAVÁČEK).—Good-bye, Láda, old boy, I thank you! And don't be angry with me, please!

Hlaváček (*Astonished*).—What puts you in this soft mood? (*Earnestly.*) Well, good-bye—and come if you care to. There's plenty of room here for you.

Bozena.—My respects, Mr. Dušek.

Réza (*Simultaneously*).—Good night!

(DUŠEK *departs. A pause.*)

Réza.—What makes that Mr. Dušek so peevish?

Hlaváček.—You know—

Šimr.—We don't know, man! Did you say anything to him?

Hlaváček.—Not a thing!

Šimr.—The crank! He changes with each moon's quarter.

Bozena (*Singing*).—"That's all because of love——"

Hlaváček (*Impatiently*).—Hush, Bozena, hush!

Šimr.—To be sure! Just because she sings a little! (*Beats time.*)

"That's all because of love
Which joyous makes the world—

Hlaváček.—Hold your tongue, Šimr, please do!

Šimr.—Well, then, it isn't! (*Seats himself on the stool and swings his legs.*) Just for that, I'll tell you a fine story, Bozena. Well, then, once upon a time there were two sisters—one had had the small-pox and the other was named Marie. And those girls had two brothers and those brothers didn't have any sisters—

Réza (*Screaming*).—Oh, we know that one!

Hlaváček (*Shakes his head thoughtfully*).—I wonder what's the matter with Dušek? I never in my life would have said—

Šimr (*Waving his hand towards the rear*).—Look at him! Haven't I always said so? All of a sudden we got too common for him—and all of a sudden they dropped him elsewhere, now he doesn't know where to head in.

Hlaváček.—He's in hard luck. Let him alone!

(ŠIMR *whistles.*)

Réza.—How that man tortured me when I use to sit for him last winter! Once he actually threw me out.

(ŠIMR *and* BOZENA *laugh.*)

Šimr.—And didn't you freeze to death, Réza? Or were you dressed?

Réza (*Laughing*).—Well, that *would* have been fine—just *that* way!

Hlaváček (*With a visible effort to lead the conversation to other subjects*).—If those two sculptors don't come, we'll eat the stuff ourselves.

Šimr.—Holla! Vaniček said he was going to be home in the evening. (*To* HLAVÁČEK.) Is he?

Hlaváček.—I don't know.

Šimr.—We'll ask. (*He strikes the wall at the back of the room.*)

Bozena.—He won't hear that.

Šimr.—Why wouldn't he hear it!

Hlaváček.—He was here this afternoon. And wanted to carry off the oleander from the front hall.

Šimr.—Just let him try it! I wouldn't return it to him if he'd flay himself alive.

Bozena.—Is that oleander his?

Šimr.—It's mine, now, Bozena, dear! In the winter it began to wither and so he presented me with it. Now I've brought it back to life, it has fine fresh young leaves and so—Vaniček wants it back.

Réza.—You'd be a fool to give anything back!

Šimr (*Shrewdly*).—I'm not so green!

Vaniček (*Enters*).—Why, aren't you people going anywhere today?

Šimr.—Don't you know this is May Day and we're celebrating?

Vaniček.—I say, Šimr, that oleander is growing first rate. I must be carrying it back.

(*The models laugh aloud.*)

Šimr.—I should say *not*!

Vaniček.—Say wouldn't you like my brand new couch also? (*A pause.*) (VANIČEK *goes to the divan on which a guitar is lying and having seated himself, whistles, thrumming on the strings meanwhile. Simultaneously a drumming on the door of the front hall is heard.*)

Šimr (*Screaming*).—Hurrah! I'll wager it's those two tramps, Malina and Paroubek! (*Stands in the center of the studio.*) The funeral march! Attention!

(*All except* HLAVÁČEK *stand up and at the top of their voices sing the funeral march.*) Tramtará ta tamtadadadada, tramtarádáda tramtaratata. Tam, tam!

Paroubek (*Enters, smiling quietly*).—A funeral?

Malina (*Enters after him and himself sings the next measures of the funeral march*).—Tramtaráta, tramtaráta, tramtara, tramtara, tramtarááá—rara—

Réza (*Mischievously screeching into* MALINA'S *singing*).—All labor has died, Paroubek, hurrah!

Hlaváček.—That pleases Paroubek.

Paroubek (*Sidles lazily towards the divan where he sits down*).—You do like to grind, don't you Hlaváček? But you haven't hurt yourself yet by overwork.

Hlaváček.—Why, am I a sculptor?

Šimr.—I hear, Paroubek, that you've finished that caryatid.

Malina.—Well, I'm glad of that, myself.

Paroubek (*Wrathily*).—No, I didn't! My stove smokes all the time!

Réza (*Laughing*).—Even to this day? And why do you have any fire at all? Most likely on account of that frozen thing, Marie. (*Turning to the rest.*) You have to keep a fire for her even in July, when she's posing.

Paroubek.—I'm not running any fire—don't you hear that my stove smokes? (*Indistinctly.*) Who's going to burn a fire in May? (*All laugh.*)

Šimr.—Why shouldn't you keep a fire in May? That's what a stove is for.

Hlaváček (*Strikes the table with his fist*).—Šimr if you don't cut out such silly, asinine jests—(*Shakes his finger threateningly.*)

Šimr.—Well?

Hlaváček.—Well, we'll eat that side of bacon ourselves, see?

Malina.—Well, I'm glad of that!

Bozena (*Places herself coquettishly in front of* MALINA).—What do you say to it, Mr. Malina, I want to have my hair cut short.

Malina (*In the same tone which by the disagreeable repetitions is all the more tiresome*).—Well, I'm glad of that, myself.

Paroubek.—Do it, Bozena, but wait till the moon's waxing. It'll draw your hair out again.

Šimr.—Short, everything short! Bozena has to have everything brief! She had that last beau for an entire two days.

Bozena.—Just wait till a wife has *you* on a short bridle!

Paroubek (*Settled comfortably on the divan. Pokes* VANIČEK *with his elbow*).—D'ye know whom we met just now?

Hlaváček (*Who, during the scene just preceding has sat with his hands on his knees, on the stool near the easel, hears* PAROUBEK'S *words*).—Was it Dušek?

Paroubek (*Nodding*).—Dušek. Was he here?

Šimr.—Yes, and poisoned the air. (*Opening the parcel which he brought.*) If it got even into this side of bacon——

Paroubek (*Continuing*).—He certainly looks bad—doesn't he, Láda?

Hlaváček.—Did you talk with him?

Paroubek.—I should say not! He turned the corner when he caught sight of us.

Bozena.—He won't hear that.

Šimr.—Why wouldn't he hear it!

Hlaváček.—He was here this afternoon. And wanted to carry off the oleander from the front hall.

Šimr.—Just let him try it! I wouldn't return it to him if he'd flay himself alive.

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Paroubek.—I'm not running any fire—don't you hear that my stove smokes? (*Indistinctly.*) Who's going to burn a fire in May? (*All laugh.*)

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Hlaváček.—Did you talk with him?

Paroubek.—I should say not! He turned the corner when he caught sight of us.

Hlaváček.—Upon my soul, boys, I've felt as if I'd gotten a whipping ever since I saw Dušek. I have a feeling all the time that we shouldn't have let him go away.

Šimr.—I suppose I ought to have implored him not to leave.

Hlaváček.—You know him and you know how morbid he is. And these evenings, in solitude, with horrible thoughts—(*Rises*) Do you know what, I'm going to get him!

Šimr.—It's a wonder you wouldn't get tired of it!

Hlaváček.—He talked such queer things here—Upon my soul, I almost have a fear for him!

Šimr.—You idiot—He likes himself too well.

Hlaváček (*Stands undecided in the center of the studio.*)

Réza.—The other day I almost wept for Dušek. We found a newspaper in the house and there was a report of the Christmas exhibition. And what they said about Dušek!

Hlaváček.—I know! (*Tosses his head.*) You know, Šimr.

Šimr.—You recall, boys, how Dušek raged last year when they praised someone else instead of him? Once he actually startled me by saying he'd become stunted in growth among us!

Paroubek.—Eh, you can't stop the growth of a good seed!

Šimr.—Like you, for instance? (*Laughs, then gravely.*) But Dušek already had this in his blood! As long as he kicked others, it was all right—but now when someone kicks him down—

Hlaváček (*In a low voice*).—Stop it, Šimr!

Šimr.—Just stand up for him! Such a thing as this happens only to such fine gentlemen as he was. (*Angrily.*) If I'm a painter, then I'm a painter—and if I'm a baron, then I'm a baron! But to quit painting to imitate a baron——

Hlaváček.—It's a pity, it's a pity to lose such skill! How that man understood colors and what ideas he had! It was exactly as if—(*At that instant a hollow sound echoes in the front hall caused by a fall.* HLAVÁČEK *is startled.*) What is happening out there?

Šimr (*Looks out of the door. With comic sorrow*).—Alas, our Lord Jesus! (*Goes into front hall.*)

(*All display excitement.*)

Šimr (*Returns carrying the broken oleander in a shattered jardinere*).—Look, Vaniček, we shan't go to law about the oleander! It fell of itself from the stand to the floor.

Bozena (*Surprised*).—Didn't someone knock it down?

Hlaváček (*Uneasily*).—Why, we were all here!

Réza.—That's a sign!

Malina.—Well, I'm glad of that myself.

Šimr.—A sign, indeed! That Vaniček will now have holy peace.

Paroubek.—Réza, you're superstitious!

Hlaváček (*In the meantime has seized his hat. Uncertainly*—. Boys, I'm going down for Dušek after all——

Šimr.—What, again?

Hlaváček.—I haven't any peace here while I don't know about him. (*Departing.*) I'm back in a few minutes. (*A pause. All gaze after* HLAVÁČEK.)

Šimr (*Bursts out abruptly*).—I say this is too much!

Paroubek (*In a deep voice*).—Come, let's talk about ghosts!

Réza (*Shivers*).—Oh, do hush!

Bozena.—Let's rather talk about something else! Mr. Šimr, what really did happen to Dušek?

Šimr.—The Lord only knows! He won't tell! Apparently that—that—what's her name—quit him, that time. But there must be something else in it. A man doesn't go to seed that way for a woman.

Réza (*Merrily pushes him aside*).—Well, *I'll* not get foolish about anyone!

(VANIČEK *thrums again on the guitar and whistles.*)

Bozena.—Pst!

(*All become quiet.*)

(VANIČEK *whistles to the picking of his guitar a popular melody.* MALINA *stands up and marks time.*) Tramtá, tramdá, tram táda, táda, táda——

Šimr (*Pokes him*).—Keep still!

(VANIČEK *whistles and plays on until he has finished the entire song.*)

Malina (*Succeeding him*).—And now, Vána! (*Giving him the key.*)

When I was going through Putím gate
Two lovely maids there lay in wait
They cried "You little student,
You surely are quite verdant!"

(VANIČEK *accompanies him on the guitar. The rest sing the second stanza with* ŠIMR.)

Maidens, why call me "student"
Why be so very imprudent?
To love you, maids, I do not dare,
To study is my one sole care.

Bozena.—What kind of song is that, pray?

Malina.—That's Aleš's* favorite, don't you know it? (*Sings on.*)

You'll pine for me, my little lass,
When in Putím church I'm saying mass.
The very first will be for you
'Tis really all that I can do!

Šimr.—And now we'll start the side of bacon! (*Stands up and draws out his pocket knife.*) Wait a minute! (*Takes the the decorative plate from the wall.*)

(VANIČEK *whistles and plays a sentimental waltz.*)

Paroubek (*Shouts out*).—Miss Foy! (*Runs to the wall where hang all sorts of costumes.*)

Šimr (*Laughing*).—Behold, what agility has entered Paroubek!

Paroubek (*Standing close to the wall, quickly arrays himself in various pieces of* SLOVÁK *costume. He wraps a piece of cloth about his head, etc. Then he runs to center of studio*).—The Spiral dance, please! Play, Vána! (*Turns and bends in the manner of serpentine dancers.*)

(VANIČEK *whistles the waltz anew.*)

Šimr (*Carrying the plate to the little table says to* PAROUBEK.—Look out, you'll run into something—! (*Places the meat on the plate and slices it.*)

(VANIČEK *whistles on.*)

(PAROUBEK *dances grotesquely.*)

(*The models laugh boisterously.*)

Šimr (*Who has in the meantime sliced the meat and is counting those present*).—One, two, three, four, five—and I am six. One piece for each one. Come! (*Reaches into the dish.*) I'll take two.

Paroubek (*Stops*).—I'll fix you! (*Runs after him.*)

*Mkolás Ales, 1852–1913—A painter of great renown among Slavs, illustrated practically all the rich and common Slavic folk songs and poems, also produced many historical pictures.

Šimr (*Dodging him*).—Wouldn't you like some gin? (*All scream out.*) Gin?

Šimr (*Laughs*).—Mushrooms! But, since it's the first of May—wait a minute! (*He takes down a bottle from the shelf.*) Long live Slovakland!

Bozena (*Cries out*).—Good luck to Slovakland!

Šimr (*Takes a drink and hands it to the rest*).—The one who drinks the last drop has to buy a new bottle!

Malina.—Indeed! (*Takes a long drink.*)

Šimr.—Malina, sing something from Slovakland to that gin. (MALINA *wiping his lips sings.*)

Into the room
Tripped Marie mine
The priest after her
With bottled wine!

(VANIČEK *accompanies him.*)
(MALINA *singing.*)

Marie, drink,
Be in no hurry.
You'll be as ruddy
As a strawberry!

(*Shouts*).—Huzza!

Vaniček (*When* MALINA *has finished singing.* VANIČEK begins *playing and whistling another song.*)

Paroubek (*While* VANIČEK *plays*).—I wonder why Hlaváček doesn't come?

Malina.—He could have been back here from Dušek's twice. He lives just around the corner.

Réza (*Shivering*).—Ugh! I've got the shivers!

Šimr.—What's the matter, Réza, anyway?

Réza (*Uneasily*).—Why, I just felt a chill go over me all of a sudden, now——

Bozena.—Are you ill, Réza?

Šimr.—Oh, there's nothing the matter with her, at all! You'd drive a man insane! (*Suddenly.*) By thunder, let's have some illumination! (*Draws from the corner a great wooden candle-stick on which is a twisted sheet of paper in imitation of a wax candle. He places the candle-stick in the middle of the studio.*) If there's to be a celebration, let there be light!

Bozena.—Why, it's only paper? (*Laughs.*)

Šimr.—That's the joke of it! That's for Dušek's miserable soul!

Réza (*Screams out*).—Jesus, Mary—hush, Mr. Šimr! Don't say it—not even in fun!

Šimr.—Don't frighten us every little while by screaming, Réza! (*Goes to her.*) Come on, let's rather have a little dance. Vána will play a gallop. (ŠIMR *dances with* RÉZA.)

Malina.—Come on, Bozena! (*He dances with* BOZENA.)

Paroubek.—Don't stamp! The major downstairs will come up and read you the riot act.

Malina (*Dancing*).—Well, I'm glad of this, myself.

Šimr (*Dancing*).—Who says we're stamping?

Malina (*Loosens his hold of* BOZENA).—I'm out of practice! Come and sit down, Bozena! (*Seats himself beside her on the divan.*)

(VANIČEK *bangs the strings and stops playing.*)

Šimr (*With* RÉZA *in his arms*).—Well, what?

Vaniček.—Next year, again!

Paroubek (*Draws a cornucopia from his pocket*).—Look, what I found at home today. It's a cornucopia full of bengal powder left over from last year when we did that "living pictures" stunt!

Malina (*Quickly*).—Come, let's do a tableau now!

Šimr.—What shall it be?

Paroubek.—Wait, something improvised! Bozena, you climb upon the table!

(BOZENA *climbs up on the table.*)

Paroubek.—Réza, you take the azaleas.

(RÉZA *gets the azaleas.*)

Paroubek.—Vaniček will sit on the floor and will represent the orchestra.

(VANIČEK *seats himself on the floor.*)

Paroubek.—Now, where'll we put these two stumps? (*Looks around at* ŠIMR *and* MALINA. *Just then a bell in the front hall sounds.*)

Bozena (*Cries out*).—The major is coming!

Malina (*Simultaneously*).—That's Hlaváček.

Šimr.—He wouldn't ring. (*Looks into front hall.*) Open! (*Goes out.*) Ah, my respects, Mr. Bukač! (*Returns to studio.*)

Paroubek.—Bukač! Girls, call out "Long live the seventh Great Power!" Glory to the editor!

Réza (*Simultaneously*).—Long live the seventh Great Power!

Bozena (*Simultaneously*).—Glory!

Vaniček (*On the floor*).—Good luck! (*Noisily thrums on the guitar.*)

Bukač (*Enters, very much excited*).—Is Hlaváček at home?

Šimr.—No.

Bukač (*Quickly*).—Don't you know anything?

Šimr.—What?

Bukač.—Dušek shot himself.

Bozena.—Jesus, Mary! (*Jumps from the table.*)

Réza (*At the same time*).—Holy Virgin Mary! (*Drops the azaleas.*)

Šimr, Vaniček, Paroubek and Malina (*all at once*).—What! Dušek? How? Where? (*They surround* BUKAČ.)

Bukač.—He shot himself just now in his studio. (*Breathing deeply with weariness.*) They telephoned us from the Aid station—(*In the front hall the door bangs.*) I came running here for Hlaváček—I need some facts for the obituary.

Hlaváček (*Bursts into the studio, rushes directly to the little table, opens the drawer and feels inside, then cries out*).—With my revolver! That's why he came here! (*All completely horrified.*)

Curtain.

JAROSLAV KVAPIL

By Šárka B. Hrbkova

TO the American public the world of Bohemian literature of the present day is practically a closed book, hence to presuppose an intimate acquaintance with the dramatic writers of the nation of Čechs is an unwarranted presumption.

It is only since 1848 when the nation awakened from its two hundred year swoon resulting from the almost mortal wound inflicted at the Battle of Bilá Hora, that the truly wonderful literary energy of the people has displayed itself. It would be a misappellation to designate the few efforts during the period of the nation's lethargy as literature. A nation which, at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War—that long agony which had its inception in Bohemia—lost by exile thirty-six thousand of its most progressive and best educated citizens and its liberty at the same time could hardly be expected to recover at once.

Physically speaking, it would have been preposterous to look for a literary impetus or development at a time when it was possible for a certain Jesuit priest to boast that he alone had burned sixty thousand Bohemian books.

The quivering throes of the nation during the generations preceding 1830 could hardly be looked upon as anything else but the reflex shudders of a corpse. But the blood, apparently congealed, began once more to course through the stiff veins when the breath of freedom and democracy at first wafted, then like a mighty gale, fairly rushed through the land in 1848, revivifying, renewing, inspiring everywhere.

In the land of the westernmost Slavs—Bohemia—the long suppressed Čechs arose to assert themselves not alone as Čechs—sturdy Slavs and troublesome obstacles in the path of the All-Deutsch policy of their northern neighbors but as men, as citizens of the world demanding their human rights and insisting on the equality of privileges and freedom of thought and expression.

It was at the high tide of reaction that Karel Havlíček, the

patriot editor of the *National News* (*Národni Noviny*) became the leader of the new spirit in Bohemia and set high the standard of literary virility, courage and worth. Mawkish sentimentality in patriotism or letters was so bitterly scored by the forceful statesman-editor that the very causticity of his arraignment fairly seared the edges of maudlin pseudo-patriotism and insured the growth of healthy tissue in place of the old and useless.

Since that time the cuticle of Bohemian literature has many times needed the beneficial cauterizing of a fearless Havliček. Yet, on the whole, it has had an unusually wholesome and virile development so that few nations indeed can boast of so many productions of relatively high merit as are shown by the literary annals of Bohemia in the latter half of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the present century.

Each field of literary endeavor has been tilled and well tilled by these awakened dreamers of the Slavic race who have been cradled in the heart of Europe since the fifth century.

František Palacky whose monumental history of Bohemia has been ranked by W. S. Monroe in "Bohemian Language and Literature" as on a par with the works of Freeman in England and Motley in America; Jan Kollar, seer of the Slavonian, poet of "The Daughter of Sláva" and projector of Panslavism; Pavel Šafařik, student of antiquities, working also for Slavonic brotherhood; Hanka, Čelakovsky, Erben, folklorists and earlier poets; Bozena Némcova, Caroline Světla, Alois Jirasek, Julius Zeyer, Karel Rais in the field of fiction; Vítězslav Hálek, Svatopluk Čech, Julius Zeyer, Joseph V. Sládek, Jaroslav Vrchlicky*, Joseph S. Machar, Fr. X. Svoboda among the poets who have earned and won renown in later times; Joseph K. Tyl, Václav Klicpera, Emanuel Bozděch, František A. Šubert, Joseph Štolba and Jaroslav Kvapil among the dramatic writers—all these are names of men and women who have produced lasting and valuable literature.

When a man has been occupied in one or more divisions of literary endeavor it is always a little difficult to properly classify him. So, in the case of Jaroslav Kvapil who has been an indefatigable literary worker, who has produced several volumes of lyric poetry, a number of dramatic works and also several librettos and translations, it appears a dubitable question to some whether

*Vrchlicky ranks also among Dramatists. Readers of POET LORE will recall the translations given of "At the Chasm," and "The Witness," and the account of his work by Charles Recht.

Kvapil should be counted as a poet, as a dramatist or as both.

Jaroslav Kvapil was born in September, 1868 in Chuděnice in Bohemia. He completed the Gymnasium in Pilsen and then went to the University of Prague where he studied law. Since the beginning of his university studies he has continuously resided in Prague in Bohemia, making only occasional visits to surrounding European countries.

In his twenty-first year he published a small volume of lyric poems under the title of "Falling Stars" (Padajici Hvězdy). This collection was republished in 1897. Soon after the first appearance of Kvapil in his books of lyrics, other collections of lyrical compositions followed, "The Reliquary" (Reliquie) (1890); "The Diary of a Poet" (Básnikuv Dennik) (1890); "Above the Ruins of Charles' Bridge," (Nad Zříceninou Karlova Mostu) (1890); "The Rose Bush" (Ruzový Ker) (1890); "Silent Love" (Tichá Láska) (1891); "Liber Aureus" (1893); "Devotion," (Oddanost) (1896); "The Ruins of the Cathedral" (Trosky Chrámu) (1899); "Andante" (1903); and a cycle, "Veils" (Závoje) (1907). In 1907 the collected poems of Kvapil were published, representing chronologically the growth of his view point between the years 1886 and 1906.

The earlier collections are poems more or less echoing in form and spirit the French lyric poetry of the day, being distinctly erotic with a strong inclination towards melancholy dreaminess. From the stage in which he puts on the mask of blasé weariness he advances to a grateful and devoted love full of joy and happiness; then, experiencing the period of quiet resignation, warming the wounded heart in the glow of the home-circle hearth, he passes to fervent elegiac verse.

Through all these phases, however, he preserves two strong and well defined tendencies. These developed more fully only at a much later date, when he had ceased to produce poetry, after he had left journalism which he had entered through the door of *Hlas Národu* and *Národni Listy*, both Prague publications, and had connected himself permanently with the stage in the capacity of a dramatic writer and collaborator with his gifted wife, the renowned actress, Hana Kvapilová. These two marks of power were his strong inclination towards the poetic tale—really towards the new romanticism and a rare faculty for the symmetrical decoration of the artistic whole.

As a dramatist Kvapil began with the sententious "Twilight" (*Přítmí*) in 1895 and the following year produced the drama of

artist life in Prague "The Will o' the Wisp" (*Bludička*). The influence of Maeterlinck is clearly shown in his next work, a lyrical trilogy "Memento" finished towards the close of 1896.

Most happily did he combine the fascinating humor of fanciful lore with lyric melancholy and delicacy in his fairy drama "Princess Dandelion" (*Princezna Pampeliška*), published in 1897. Seven years elapse before another play is produced, the beautiful drama *Clouds* ("Oblaka") being completed in 1904. The last named is the first of Kvapil's plays to appear in English dress, having been translated by Charles Recht and printed in *Poet Lore*, December, 1910. In 1906 Kvapil wrote his national fairy tale "The Orphan" (Sirotek) in which he unites not so successfully as in *Princess Dandelion* allegorical types with genre sketches from life.

In addition to this original work, Kvapil within very recent years has become strongly interested in Henrik Ibsen whose satirical social plays had been given presentation on the Bohemian stage since 1883. Practically all of Ibsen's dramas had been translated into the Bohemian at this time but within the last ten years Kvapil has prepared new translations of these works of the great Scandinavian which especially appealed to him.

In 1906 Kvapil translated "The Lady from the Sea" following it up soon after (1908) with a translation of "Ghosts" whose title, however, he gives as "Spectres." Although G. Eim had translated "Pillars of Society" as early as 1879,—this version being in common use in the Bohemian theaters,—Kvapil in 1910 prepared an exceptionally faithful translation of the same satire. "Hedda Gabler" had twice been translated into the Čech, but Kvapil's version made in 1911 is looked upon as the best. His most recent translation is "The Master Builder" done in 1912.

Mr. Kvapil is publishing those translations in the "World Library" (Svetova Knihovna), a very superior series of world-classics which he has been editing since 1897 for the J. Otto Publishing Company of Prague, Bohemia.

Kvapil has also written a number of successful librettos, among them "The Peasants' Rebellion" for Lošták, "Perdita," "Debora" and "The Water-Sprite" ((Rusalka).

He has been assistant to Gustav Schmoranz, director of the Bohemian National Opera, for a number of years, being drawn to this work through the great artistic successes of his wife Hana Kvapilová who for many years (1860-1907) played the leading roles in the chief playhouse of the Čech nation. Kvapilová played

Helen in "Will o' the Wisp," *Hedda* in "Hedda Gabler," *Nora* in the "Doll's House" as well as the regular leads in Shakespeare and other classic dramas.

The Memoirs of this gifted and much beloved Bohemian actress were prepared and published by Kvapil. In recent years, Mr. Kvapil has been acting as editor of *Zlatá Praha* ("Golden Prague") the leading art and literary journal of Bohemia.

TO BE, OR NOT TO BE,—AGAIN

By Morris LeRoy Arnold

IN this age of warfare it is refreshing to find an intellectual antagonist who challenges one to a combat in the Shakespearean arena not for the joy of the fighting, but for the sake of the trophy Truth. Mr. Charles M. Street in a recent article* on Hamlet's soliloquy, 'To be, or not to be,' contends (1) that the speech is overheard by the King and Polonius, and (2) that Hamlet, conscious of their presence, pretends to soliloquize for the benefit of Claudius. Thus, this speech, hitherto regarded as the greatest soliloquy in English drama, is now presented as no soliloquy at all, in the technical sense of the term, but rather as a feigned soliloquy, in which Hamlet, pretending to meditate, purposely plays upon the suspicions and superstitions of the lurking King. Such an interpretation stimulates because of its novelty. Mr. Street courteously reminds me that I have not considered this interpretation in my study,† and he challenges me to answer six points which he makes in behalf of his contention.

Therefore I take up the gauntlet, conscious that there is no glory in my position, as I am constrained to represent that most unpopular of types, a conservative. It is picturesque to be the herald of a new faith; it is a dreary task to champion an ancient tradition. I must needs be spokesman for the ordinary, obvious, generally accepted tradition and interpretation of a famous passage. Further, Mr. Street makes the very unlawyer-like stipulation that I pay no 'undue respect to any array of critics or stage tradition howsoever authoritative.' I must take the traditional view, but not go to tradition for my authority. Granted. Let us go to Shakespeare. But first let us go to Mr. Street.

First—Says Mr. Street, 'Shakespeare has given us evidence that fully advises the audience of Hamlet's knowledge of the

*Poet Lore, Volume 25, page 461.
†'The Soliloquies of Shakespeare.' (Columbia University Press, N. Y., 1911.)

espials (Claudius and Polonius) before he enters.' This is an important point in the argument, for Shakespeare invariably prepares an audience for a big situation, and most certainly he would if the complication were as involved as the one suggested,—namely, that Hamlet, aware that he is overheard, is pretending to soliloquize, so that he may be overheard. Mr. Street buttresses his original assertion with several illustrations. In the first place, the remark of Claudius shortly before Hamlet appears, 'We have closely sent for Hamlet hither,' seems to Mr. Street decidedly significant. 'Closely' he defines as meaning 'covertly.' No one would deny that, but why, if 'closely' means 'covertly' or 'secretly,' should we jump to the conclusion that the errand was clumsily, stupidly or at least obviously performed? The word gives the reverse impression. Claudius has proceeded with stealth to get Hamlet to pass this way. Hamlet does so. True, Hamlet has been suspicious of the attendance of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, but is that reason to assume that when he is walking alone, he believes the walls lined with ears,—to be exact, the pair of ears belonging to Claudius? If Shakespeare had had any such idea he would have said so. Instead, he informs us that the King was secret, covert, in his method of getting Hamlet to walk in this direction. The fact is that our very discussion of this little phrase exaggerates its importance. Its function is merely that of the 'prepared entrance.' The audience expects to see Hamlet appear, and that expectation is forthwith gratified. This dramaturgic device illustrates Shakespeare's usual form of procedure, simple, straightforward.

Again, asks Mr. Street, 'is Hamlet to be deceived by the guileless Ophelia under unnatural conditions after he had just outwitted two astute young men under natural conditions?' That is another story, his suspicions of Ophelia. Many critics believe that Hamlet's question, 'Where's your father?' indicates Hamlet's sudden realization of the presence of the eavesdroppers. Many actors arrange the stage business in order to carry out that idea: just before Hamlet asks the question, he glances back and catches a glimpse of the conspirators lurking behind the arras. Certain it is that throughout the colloquy Ophelia is a very poor actress and that Hamlet, at first gentle and sincere with her ('Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remember'd,') is, after Ophelia's falsehood, harsh and wildly satiric. As Mr. Street admits,* the ejaculation at the beginning of the colloquy,

*POET LORE, Volume 20, page 472.

'Ha, ha, are you honest?' is no indication that Hamlet has spied the eavesdroppers. Mr. Street nevertheless believes that Hamlet is cognizant of the eavesdroppers during the entire interview as well as the preceding monolog. Some maintain—Mr. Grant White, for one—that he does not suspect their presence during the whole scene. And others hold that Hamlet realizes the true situation only during the latter half of the dialog. But that is not the question. Our query concerns itself not with the dialog but with the monolog preceding it.

'Finally, as evidence showing that Hamlet was not only conscious of the presence of espials before he enters to deliver the "soliloquy," but that our poet has prepared the King to respond to just such torment in double meanings, subtle hints and picturesque superstitions, all reinforced by rhythmic eloquence, as are contained in the "soliloquy," we have the "aside" of Claudius expressing the effect of a remark of Polonius as his last utterance before Hamlet commences his "To be or not to be."' It is difficult to get the point of this assertion. The King's 'aside,' showing the workings of his conscience, has nothing to do with the eavesdropping. Hamlet has not yet appeared, and before he does, Polonius observes, 'I hear him coming; let's withdraw, my lord.' They withdraw before Hamlet enters. That they linger after his appearance, according to the crude and untrustworthy first quarto edition has nothing to do with the evidence. The first folio text, which all of the best commentators adopt for the reading of this passage, clearly indicates the withdrawal of the conspirators before the entrance of Hamlet. Therefore, it appears, none of the above citations made by Mr. Street—nor any other passage in the drama, for that matter—gives the audience any evidence whatsoever as to Hamlet's knowledge of the spies, Claudius and Polonius, before Hamlet enters.

Second—Says Mr. Street, 'The soliloquy is superstitious. If there is a hereafter that carries forward the consciousness of this life, only the superstitious dread it.' Many will question the truth of this generalization. The majority of human beings, like animals, have an instinctive fear of death—and this quite apart from their mental acumen. One reason that this soliloquy grips the popular imagination is because it immortally phrases the universal dread of death. True, the imagery of dreams is used to convey the feeling, and some consider that indicative of superstition. Hamlet's conception of immortality is not that of

Herbert Spencer nor of Thomas Edison. Hamlet is a thinker, but he is a product of the early seventeenth century, a period when superstition was rife among the keenest intellects,—witness the belief in witchcraft by Elizabeth, Raleigh, Bacon and James. Indeed, Hamlet shows his credence in demonology, not in this soliloquy, but in the preceding one when he reflects:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be the devil; and the devil hath power
> To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me.

Hamlet is absolutely alone when he makes this assertion to himself. There is no question that he believes it. Accordingly, judged by modern standards, Hamlet is superstitious. His 'To be or not to be' does not reveal the superstitious side of his nature, however, but, if it did, it would not indicate that Hamlet is feigning a soliloquy for the benefit of the superstitious(?) Claudius.

Third—Says Mr. Street, 'Hamlet is not superstitious.' We have just shown that he is. True, Hamlet, is 'intellectual and spiritual.' The great soliloquy harmonizes with these traits. Mr. Street is entirely justified in citing various passages to show that Hamlet at certain crises is not dreading the undiscovered country. Why will twentieth century critics persist in that old-time fallacy of striving to make Hamlet every instant consistent with himself? Hamlet is human, he has temperament. Is there anything inconsistent in the fact that a man dreads death one day and embraces it the next? There are countless instances in the old world struggle at this moment, I have no doubt, of such an heroic change of front.

Fourth—'But Claudius is superstitious.' Is he? He fears the Eternal Judge, as evidenced by those noble lines:

> In the corrupted currents of this world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
> And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above;

There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
To give in evidence.

Is not 'superstitious' too strong an epithet for such a sublime conception? Some people today do not believe in a hereafter, and some assume an agnostic attitude toward immortality, but nearly all of us, whether we subscribe to a creed or not, have an instinctive feeling that here or hereafter, some way, some how, there is just retribution for sin. The poet ascribes to the King in beautifully concrete imagery this abstract conception of poetic justice—'the ultimate sanity of the universe,' John Fiske would have called it. You may regard the King's conception as broadly theological, if you like, but I quarrel with the word 'superstitious.' But, for the sake of argument, call it that. Then what? What bearing has that on the controversy? To Hamlet death is an undiscovered country. Claudius has a large conception of retribution for sin after death. Is there any cause and effect here?

To summarize. Mr. Street believes (1) that Hamlet is not superstitious, (2) that the soliloquy of Claudius is superstitious, and (3) that 'To be, or not to be' is superstitious in its dread of death. I have striven to indicate that the reverse of each of these statements is true. So much for superstition. Now for suspicion.

Fifth—'Claudius is suspicious and the soliloquy is specially adapted to aggravate his suspicions.' We have just suggested that it is not so adapted. Mr. Street continues, 'The espials should at all times be visible to the audience in order that the effect of the "soliloquy" may be observed by the expression in their respective faces.' But Polonius has said, 'Let us withdraw,' and they have done so. During the ensuing colloquy between Hamlet and Ophelia, the conspirators are behind the arras, as Polonius had previously arranged it:

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him;
Be you and I behind an arras then;
Mark the encounter.

By what authority does Mr. Street alter Shakespeare's stage directions? He makes the eavesdroppers 'at all times visible'—

before as well as during the encounter.

Mr. Street's theory induces him to read into Hamlet's phrases meanings 'doubly redoubled.' For example, he tells us that 'Claudius does not suspect Hamlet knows he is present till Hamlet refers to "outrageous fortune." But why this implication in that innocent phrase? Does any one doubt that Hamlet has suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune? What more natural than this plaint in his communing with himself?

Next Mr. Street asserts that taking 'arms against a sea of troubles' 'cannot but suggest to the suspicious mind of Claudius that his own life is in jeopardy.' But why would Claudius, if he were listening, consider 'a sea of troubles' a reference to himself? He would be very suspicious indeed to wrest such a metaphorical meaning from the context. Whereas anyone might hesitate to identify Claudius with a sea of troubles, no one doubts that Hamlet is baffled by a sea of troubles—that is the essence of the tragedy.

Since Mr. Street begins the analysis of the soliloquy in this fashion, we are not surprised that he finds in every phrase of the speech a subtle stab intended for Claudius. He even goes so far, if I understand him aright, as to interpret 'quietus' as the idea of 'suicide' which Hamlet is suggesting to Claudius. Although Mr. Street's interpretation of the whole soliloquy as feigned and overheard is, so far as I know, unique, this extraordinary idea that Hamlet is thinking not of himself but of the King has been anticipated by the practical common sense of Dr. Johnson as well as by the astute scholarship of Professor Charlton M. Lewis, who affirms: 'Hamlet is thinking not of committing suicide but of actively pursuing his revenge.' ('The Genesis of Hamlet,' page 100.) Mr. Lewis admits, however, that 'unless we are misled by printers' omissions, the Hamlet of the first quarto is certainly meditating suicide.' The transposition of the soliloquy in the final version and the alterations of the text do not appear to warrant the complete change of meaning, and I think we may still feel, as the vast majority of readers and critics and actors have felt for the past three centuries, that Hamlet here, as in his first soliloquy, contemplates self-slaughter.

> O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
> Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
> Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
> His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!

This is the first outburst of his anguish in the isolation of soliloquy, and 'To be, or not to be' very naturally continues the theme. It refers to his own living or dying, not the King's.

But how is it possible for Mr. Street and his eminent predecessors to wrest an objective and not a subjective meaning from the soliloquy? Can the entire speech be applied equally well to Hamlet or to Claudius? It may be applied to you or to me. But does Shakespeare give no evidence? Abundant evidence, for either contention—he is like the Bible in that respect. But how can this be great literature, the greatest literature, if the meaning is not clear? It is clear. It is a general reflection on the enigmatic relation of life and death, and yet it is poignantly specific. Therein is the paradox. Therein is the appeal—the same appeal that one feels in the message of the old morality play 'Everyman.' Every man is, for the moment, Hamlet confronting the injustice of life, the mystery of death.

That is the proof, so far as there can be any proof, that this, like all of Hamlet's soliloquies, is subjective. It is at once profoundly introspective and transparently simple. His tense musing takes the form of debate. He puts the question tersely: 'To be, or not to be'—to exist, or not to exist. What more natural than a return to the contemplation of suicide? Then four lines expand the theme,—not, to be sure, in legal phraseology, but in terms of his own overwhelming feeling:

> Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
> The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
> Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
> And by opposing end them?

Hamlet might have made it personal grammatically, as it assuredly is psychologically. He might have demanded, 'Shall I suffer this outrageous fortune?' and continued in like strain. But he was not making a speech for others. He was sensing, perceiving. By virtue of the convention of the soliloquy, we are transported into the very brain and soul of the protagonist.

Now the negative element of his being makes a moving plea for non-existence:

> To die,—to sleep,—
> No more; and by a sleep to say we end
> The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks

That flesh is heir to,—'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

Such momentary moods come to many—such was the impulse of Job. Then the normal element in Hamlet's nature regains its sway, beginning tentatively, apparently granting the negative's point, but proceeding with increasing conviction to develop a line of reasoning to show, not why man should be, but why he is. The conclusion to 'bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of' puts an end to Hamlet's idea of suicide; and this decision, or rather lack of decision, is corroborated by the cynical observation:

Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

Action quelled by thought—this is Hamlet's oft-repeated accusation of 'thinking too precisely on the event,' as he puts it later in another famous soliloquy. In both of these soliloquies, Hamlet could not be more completely isolated in his revery. So rapt is he that he is unconscious of the presence of Ophelia until he exclaims, 'Soft you now! The fair Ophelia!' Not at all an unusual situation in Elizabethan drama, this of th entering soliloquizer oblivious to the presence of someone on the stage.

No internal evidence, then, of the eavesdroppers, Claudius and Polonius. What of the external evidence?

Sixth—Mr. Street cites, as corroborative evidence, a group of plays of Shakespeare's in which soliloquies are overheard—a device frequently used before the nineteenth century and occasionally since then. In each case in which Shakespeare makes use of the device, he makes it obvious that the soliloquy is overheard. Not so in the case of 'To be, or not to be,' Further, in no instance does Shakespeare employ the fantastic contrivance of the feigned soliloquy, with the possible exception of Edmund's bit of bravura ('Lear,' I, 2). When Edmund begins to meditate on Edgar, that person appears. 'Pat,' ruminates Edmund, 'he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy.' Hamlet makes

no such remark about Claudius. In general, Shakespeare, like other English playwrights, abjures such intricate and palpably artificial contrivances as the feigned soliloquy, although it had considerable vogue in Roman comedy, with some survivals in Italy and France—notably in Molière.

That Shakespeare would select a tense moment in his tragic masterpiece for such a grotesque situation as Hamlet's feigning a soliloquy in order that the King might overhear him,—this is unthinkable. That he would, having such a device in mind, give no clear indication of it in word or deed is unparalleled, quite contrary to his dramaturgic practice. Finally, that the soliloquy preeminent in English drama for nuance of utterance, penetrative melancholy and introspective brooding should be regarded as a fake, that the 'soliloquy' should be written in quotation marks—Mr. Street's usage—that it is no soliloquy at all, but rather a clever bit of foolery of Hamlet's in order to hoodwink the King,—to assume all this is to forget the profundity, the sobriety and the sincerity of the utterance. Hamlet has his sportive moods, it is true. He is a creature of moods. Here, for the moment, he is solemnly confronting the issue of life or death.

Mr. Street has presented an ingenious argument and he has deftly elaborated it. I do not question the sincerity of his point of view. I respect it, just as I do the various opinions and interpretations of the famous soliloquy in the Furness Variorum edition (Volume I, pages 204-215). How can we account for these conflicting opinions? The language of Hamlet is similar to that of Jesus in its clarity of purpose and in its symbolic expression. In the speech of both there is an identification of the abstract with the concrete. Every metaphor has its application to the lot of mankind, as well as to the crisis in Hamlet's existence: 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,' 'a sea of troubles,' to die—to sleep—to dream. Definite, graphic. But what is the meaning of these conceptions in terms of ultimate reality? Who knows?

I often chuckle when I think how amused Shakespeare would be, if he could have access to Shakespeareana, that immense library which has grown up since his death, devoted largely to critical controversy. Perhaps, if he were here, he would, as Mr. Browning often did in a like dilemma, listen gravely to our conflicting theories, and then diffidently venture an enigmatic opinion of his own.

The truth is—Shakespeare knows it—that the soliloquy 'To be, or not to be' requires no elucidation. Here Hamlet balances the injustices of life against the mystery of death, and his speech is the very image of his thought.

THE ART OF PLAY INTERPRETATION

By G. F. Reynolds

THERE is an art of more importance to lovers of drama than most dwellers in the largest cities are likely to consider it—the art of play interpretation. To the great majority of Americans, a new play —and most of the old ones—means not a stage performance with lights and color and movement, but a book merely of black type and unilluminating directions. So far as that goes, in the present state of our theatre, the only chance that most drama lovers in the large cities or elsewhere have of getting acquainted with great plays, except by means of the dead page, is through the dramatic reader, and the overwhelming interest in plays is no better attested than by the large number of persons engaged in this sort of work. As yet, however, there has been very little discussion of the standards, the limits, the methods of this art of play-reading as distinguished from that of play-acting, with the result that the present practise of it is often ineffective and sometimes offensive.

Probably the greatest difficulty of all is the failure to recognize this fundamental fact, that play-reading and play-acting *are* different. People seem to think that the play reader is making an attempt—and a sadly ineffectual one—at being an an actor, and that a play-reading is simply a fainter production of a play. The belief has been fostered no doubt by the behavior of actors who, in reading plays, have used the methods of the stage, and by readers who, as a matter of fact, were simply weak actors. The result has been to bring play-reading into undeserved scorn.

For really it is as different from acting as etching is from painting in oils. Like an etching, the reading of a play is most successful when most simple and most suggestive. As the etcher foreswears color, the reader foreswears movement and impersonation. Perhaps the most decided difference appears in the treat-

ment of the artist by himself. The actor is most successful when he loses himself in his role—when his impersonation is so far as may be complete. If the part requires it, he changes his voice, his facial expression, his carriage. He is aided in this by his assumption of a distinctive costume and of a suitable make-up. His ideal, broadly considered, is to do in any circumstances what the assumed character would do under such circumstances. He is for his audience no longer himself, he is somebody else; and he is completely successful only when he recalls not himself, but his assumed character to his audience.

But a reader is in an entirely different position. He stands before his audience always as himself: dressed in his usual garb, looking as he usually does. His audience never can forget that he is himself, and if he bows and smirks and prances about the stage, indulging in the tricks we are all only too familiar with, he is still himself, not his assumed character, and he is simply making himself ridiculous, and his intelligent auditors uncomfortable. Women who screw up their faces, talk in a hoarse voice to imitate old men, shriek wildly in blood-curdling tones, or go through all the motions of arranging their coiffure, or powdering their faces; men who squeak in a high falsetto to convey the impression of a lovely heroine, or who kneel in agonized prayer, or—we see strange things on the Chautauqua platform—squirm over the stage like eels in "The Bells," or fall sonorously asleep in an easy chair for the amusement of the Sunday School kindergarten on the front seat—all these are public pests, and whatever their prominence, libels on an essentially beautiful art. They are obviously playing a part, and that is always a painful or ridiculous performance. Roughly speaking, a reader has no business doing anything on a stage which he would not himself do in a parlor, for he is himself, and he is in a parlor, or its equivalent. Impersonation is impossible, and anything but the merest suggestion of it a violation of good taste.

Perhaps this is the reason that so many, not all, good readers insist on using a book in their performances, even though they have perfectly memorized their texts. Of course, the book is in itself of no consequence, but it is a convenient symbol. It reminds the audience that it is being read to and must not expect acting and, what is more important, it reminds the reader that he is reading and not acting. When a reader recites instead of reads, he is likely also to impress his hearers more by his "mar-

vellous" memory, which can retain a whole play rather than by the strength and compelling power of his conception. The book adds dignity to the performance, keeps reader and audience at the proper point of view, and is a hindrance only to readers with wrong ideals, or with too little force to overcome this slight barrier between themselves and their audiences. As a matter of fact, the use of a book is the only justification for the word *reader* anyway. One who does not use a text is an impersonator, or a declaimer. One reads, in anything but elocutionary jargon, only from a book or manuscript.

Of course, this limitation, that a reader must not do what he would not do in a parlor, is perhaps too strict: a somewhat greater liberty of gesture or variety of tone is not objectionable, provided it does not become obtrusive. This is indeed the real test: whenever the means used in arousing an emotion impresses us rather than the emotion itself, artistic effect is lost. And because readers do so often use obtrusive means, so many people dislike elocutionists and all their breed. Our first thought should be not of the reader's graceful gesture, or charming appearance, but of the thing read. The reader should be forgotten in the reading, otherwise the whole business is simply a personal exhibition, which some performers, it would seem, really want it to be.

What is the place, then, of the mimicry and impersonation? Perhaps a return to our figure may assist us. If a play is like an oil painting, a reading like an etching, an impersonation—that is, mimicry without change of costume,—is like caricature. Impersonation has no doubt its place, in the presentation of short, humorous pieces, analagous to the newspaper cartoon. The ludicrousness of the conception overcomes the absurdity of the means used: what business has a gentleman in evening clothes to twist his face and disarrange his hair? And this becomes an unspeakable affront to one's intelligence in serious pieces: the impersonation sometimes perpetrated by the country declaimer and some others, in "The Convict's Soliloquy," or "The Tell Tale Heart" justifies all the scorn heaped upon elocution and elocutionists. To call oneself a reader or a teacher of public speaking and carry over the same old methods, is not to improve things in the least, but only to ruin the reputation of more good English words. In any case, impersonation, however useful in short humorous bits, is as out of place in the rendition of serious plays, even for the comic characters, as to introduce the methods of Cæsare's cartoons into the etchings of Whistler.

Reading, then, has its limitations, both of methods and effects. But it has its resulting advantages. A good reading, unencumbered with distractions of scenery and costume and movement, centers the attention of the hearer upon the beauties of the text itself. Just as an etching renders supremely the charm of light and shade, of form, and of pictorial composition, so the reader, by subtle variation of tone or by significant pause, can exhibit delicate shades of emotion and meaning, which are completely lost in the more highly colored, dramatic performance. Then too, the absence of expensive settings and costumes makes production relatively easy. Readers can go to places where plays are impossible and give plays which no company would profitably attempt. That I suppose is the chief reason for the art at all, because most people would prefer to see a play acted rather then hear it read. But there is another side to this than the financial one. Anyone who has heard Dr. R. G. Moulton knows that even the Book of Job—hopeless as an acted play, makes a memorable reading, and certain plays—Hardy's "Dynasts" is a conspicuous example—can never be properly appreciated unless they are read aloud, dramatic performance, in spite of their unquestioned dramatic power, being out of the question.

Finally, reading like etching is supremely suggestive. As in the one a single line represents a river bank or a mass of clouds, so in the other a single gesture symbolizes a whole procession across the stage. There is a peculiar pleasure in the enjoyment of such an art, a pleasure in the achievement of much by little, of interpretation, of sympathetic imagination. Most people will prefer the acted play to even the best possible reading of it, and this is probably quite just. But one need not commit himself to any such discrimination. For the pleasure derived from the one is different from that found in the other, and we may without contradiction or subterfuge, appreciate both, each in its own way.

But if we are not to judge a reader by his ability as a gymnast nor as a facial contortionist nor by the strength of his memory what standards are we to judge by? First of all, is it not, by his conception of the play as a whole, its atmosphere, its currents, its crises. The justness, the sureness of this conception and the clarity and force with which it is presented are fundamental. What is true of the play as a whole is true also of each scene and of each character. Each scene has its crisis and its definite

emotional effect; each well wrought character has a certain air which must permeate every words he says. This air is not a matter of grimace or distorted posture; to make us feel it does not require physical impersonation, so much as mental understanding and sympathy. Then there are the contrasts of tone, of spirit, and of movement; especially disregarded are those of movement, tempo, powerful aids toward rendering the play alive. Finally there are the "points"—burning phrases, beautiful lines, striking aphorisms. They are the lines which when properly delivered pierce one like an arrow, summing up a situation or embodying a character in a single phrase. As nothing more thoroughly tests the genius of the playwright than the ability to create such crystallizations of insight and emotion, so nothing so much exhibits the brainlessness of a reader as to clatter heedlessly over them. It is not thundering and rant, but the quiet intonation and just tempo which marks effective reading. Perhaps the most compelling of all is lifelike intonation; it is remarkable how effective are the tones of every day speech, and how seldom we hear them either from platform or stage.

There is one more quality present in every great reading—and it distinguishes public from private reading—intensity. Given two readers of equally intelligent appreciation and equally adequate physical equipment for its expression; one may succeed only in a parlor, the other in a large auditorium, simply from the difference in intensity of conception. It is the same as with lyric poems: the thought may be equally fine, the form equally beautiful, but the presence or lack of a peculiar fire and heat of emotion distinguishes the song that will live forever from the stopgap for a half filled page. This intensity of conception is not easy to analyze either in the lyric or in a reading; but it comes fundamentally, does it not, from a vivid mental imagination and an emotion concentrated for the moment on the thing in hand? The second rate reader recognizes his lack of this power and to make up for it rants and shouts and indulges in all the antics of the elocutionist's trade. The reader of real power, using none of these methods but keeping to a quiet tone and to a minimum of gesture, stirs our hearts all the more for not bursting our ear drums or wearying our eyes. It may be that I have seemed to present reading as a dull, drab sort of art; nothing could be further from the truth. It is capable of profound effects and delightful contrasts, and its very simplicity of means makes its results all the clearer cut.

Of course much depends on the matter read. Not all interesting stories, not even all interesting plays, are suitable. Indeed I am disposed to think that the average modern play is essentially ill adapted for public reading, looked at from the reader's point of view. If it uses a flat diction—and most of them do—, if it employs a large number of undistinguished background characters, or depends much for its appeal on the beauty of its stage pictures, the reader, no matter how popular it is, has a thankless task on his hands. And of these a flat diction is the most damming; minor characters can usually be eliminated, scenery and settings described, but nothing can relieve uninspired or artificial dialogue. As a matter of fact public readers demand a form of literature written all for their own use. Unfortunately the old ballads and epics,—almost exactly that—, are dead literary forms. The reader thus has to make his medium for himself and he does so by "cutting" plays, poems, and stories to suit his needs. "Cutting" would otherwise be a pretty indefensible operation for it can present at best only a mutilated masterpiece, and at worst a mangled and distorted one. But "cutting" seems a necessary evil and its judicious employment is almost an art in itself. A good cutting does not destroy the proportion, the emphasis, or the implications of the original; especially it does not falsify its values. The cutting of a play, it seems to me, should be done with especial care. All references to its theatrical production would better be minimized—to the curtain, the stage, etc.; but its settings, its lighting, its sounds, its movements, all should be made clear through effective descriptions, not always to be found in the conventional stage directions. Thus some cuttings require an almost complete rewriting of the play in order properly to represent it.

But the reading of a great play cut judiciously and presented with intelligence, taste and intensity of conception is and so long as good stage performances are rare will continue to be, a pleasing form of art, not perhaps so impressive nor so popular but in its own way equally artistic.

THE TYPOGRAPHY OF PLAYS

By Arthur Swan

"THE innermost soul of any literary creation," the lamented Harry Thurston Peck once remarked, "can never be seen in all its clarity and truth until one views it through the medium of the printed page, in which there must be absolutely nothing to divide attention, to interrupt the thought, or to offend one's sense of form." Professor Peck had here no special reference to the typography of plays, but his words are nevertheless more pertinent to dramatic publication than to that of any other branch of literature; and this is today a question of considerable importance to our adolescent drama.

Offend one's sense of form and interrupt the thought, the cheap acting-editions,—which until a few years ago were virtually the only style of plays printed in the United States,—unequivocally did. These buff booklets, hideously typed, on inferior paper, were indeed so uninviting that it wanted a heroic reader to venture attack upon them. They were directed, of course, primarily to the actor. Now serious American plays, as well as translated drama, are printed, with an eye to the reader in the library, in a larger type, 'leaded,' on good paper, and are bound in cloth. And yet these new volumes differ from the old in degree rather than in kind: the typography remains essentially the same.

In itself a drama is easily read; its art-form is closer to life than the novel; but as they are generally printed today, plays are often almost difficult to read. When several pieces are included in a single volume, and sometimes otherwise, the text is printed 'solid,' too fine—perhaps even double-columned,—and the stage-directions invariably appear in the straining italic type. Introductory descriptions of scene may now and again be written in the weariest of stage terminology; but it is not that circumstance so much, or firstly, that incites in the reader the desire to skip: when the eye meets a whole paragraph, even page, of solid italics, it balks instinctively.

The typical play printed here and in England follows this

plan.—The stage-directions, within parentheses, are typed in italic, and as a rule, however long they may be, are unparagraphed. When the name of any character in the play occurs in the description, however, capitals are resorted to; which is anomalous esthetically and has the further disadvantage of distracting the reader's attention. Before their speeches, on the same line, the persons' names, usually in abbreviated form, are printed in small caps, or italics, or (rarely) full-face.

Thus is the average play made into a book. Of course there are variations. The names of the speakers may begin paragraphs by indentation, or by reverse-indentation; or they may be printed above the colloquy, in the middle of the page, with the 'direction' following on the same line, or set off alone immediately below, or in line with the text. Sometimes the names are not capitalized in the descriptions when merely acted upon, and sometimes not at all, though this is infrequent. The directions may be printed in the body of the dialog, or set apart; and they may be enclosed in parentheses, or in brackets, or be minus either protection. Descriptions having to do directly with the character speaking may be set differently on the page from general statements of the action.

Now how does it actually look? The 'curtain' of the first act of Bronson Howard's *Saratoga* is printed in this manner:—

Enter GUESTS. *The* ARTIST *comes in* R. 2. E. LIVINGSTON *and* OGDEN R. *and* S.

SACK. (*turns each way*). Ah, Effie!—Virginia!—Olivia! Benedict—Benedict—you have never loved as I love!

BEN. Heaven be praised, I never have!

[SACKETT *Stumbles over a dress, and he falls through the picture of "Cyrus the Great". General Commotion; the* ARTIST *strikes an attitude* R. SACKETT *scrambles to his feet with his head through the canvas, and the frame resting on his shoulders.*

CURTAIN.

What possible sense of life can a reader derive from that?

His last play, *Kate*, Howard went to the extreme of having printed in the form of a novel. But a play is not a novel and there seems no avail in dressing it up as one. Mr. Howells, in his farces, prints the expository passages without parentheses in the same sized roman-face as the conversation, which is set off by quotation-marks. In a collection of Strindberg's dramas [Stockholm, 1903] the directions appear in a like type with the dialog and are enclosed in parentheses; for emphasis, not italics, but spaced lettering is used; and the character-names are in roman caps. In the first edition of *Rosmersholm* [Copenhagen, 1886] both capitals and italics are eschewed: the names of the

persons being printed in the type of the colloquy with spaced lettering, and the descriptions appearing in a smaller roman-face. This manner of printing the stage-directions is rather common in French and German plays, and it is doubtless preferable to the italic method, provided always that the type be not too fine.

One salient shortcoming of our play publishing lies in the apparent effort to straddle, as it were, two horses, with a resultant hybrid of prompt-book and reading-copy—unsatisfactory as either. The acting-edition of Mr. Jones's *Hypocrites* [New York, 1908], for illustration, is for its overt purpose excellent: spaciously printed, with wide outside margins having detailed directions; setting-diagrams; property and lighting plots,—in brief, everything that actor and stage-director require.

A recently produced English play is advertised in a literary magazine as "Miss——'s great stage-success, in a reading edition specially prepared by the author." Should the playwright, perhaps, prepare two versions for the printer; or should he simply leave the prompt 'script to the disposition of his agent? (Ideally, of course, the minor directions are given orally to the actor, at rehearsal, by the dramatist himself.) In the original typewritten 'scripts of plays intended for representation, the directions are either printed or underlined in red. The effect of this rather drastic procedure may indeed be unsightly, but for the use of stage-folk—who principally, and often solely, view a drama as nothing more than a histrionic vehicle—it is undeniably efficacious.

For the general reader, however, this typographic method is not only without benefit, but actually harmful. He is not concerned, in the quiet of the study, or near to nature, with the hero's *crossing to* R. C. *down*, as he exclaims, "Great Heavens!" The minute information about the external action that is prerequisite for the player serves but as a hindrance to the reader. In reading a play, one should never be recalled to the theatre: the directions must be set forth in the terms of life, not of the stage. Even the words *Act* and *Curtain* might advisably be excluded; and for the unvarying, characterless *Exit*, "goes out," "leaves the room" and the like could well be substituted. The personal note affected by Sir James Barrie, and possibly venial in him, is scarcely good dramaturgy. It is questionable, also, whether Mr. Shaw and Mr. Barker are quite justified in omitting the conventional prefatory list of the Persons of the Play, which is helpful as a reference both while perusing the drama and after-

wards. But now we are entering upon ground beyond our present province.

It is auspicious, though the hybrid style still is in wide vogue, that there is an increasing diversity in the typography of plays. And, as poetry and prose-fiction are variously printed even now, it is not likely that dramatists and publishers will ever unite on any one style as definitive; nor would that, perhaps, be desirable. Tastes differ, as well as plays. Stingy of space, in any event, one must not be in the printing of drama; with the exception of one-acters, a play should always be given a volume to itself.

Putting the names in the middle of the page has this detriment, that the eye travels from the end of one speech to the beginning of another so swiftly that it often fails to take in the name of the interlocutor; whereas placing the name in line with the text gives a crowded effect, with its attendant disadvantage. *Italics* should be sparingly used, preferably only for particular emphasis; s p a c e d lettering is perhaps advisable in less forcible instances. Frugality might well be exercised also with regard to the dash and the quadrupled period. The stage-directions, which nowadays not seldom are as important and eloquent as the speech itself, may be variously set, of course, but they must be easily legible and readily distinguishable from the colloquy; putting them in italics and within brackets seems unjust.

The following specimen has been rearranged from Mr. Galsworthy's tragedy, *Justice*,—the dialog appearing in '9-point,' the description in '6-point' and the names in roman CAPS:

RUTH, leaping to her feet.

No, no! No, no! He's dead!

The figures of the men shrink back.

COKESON, stealing forward: in a hoarse voice.

There, there—poor dear woman! . . . .

At the sound behind her Ruth faces round at him.

No one'll touch him now. Never again! He's safe with gentle Jesus!

Ruth stands as though turned to stone in the doorway staring at Cokeson, who, bending humbly before her, holds out his hand as one would to a lost dog.

But wherefore all this pother about the *printing* of plays? Is not a play composed to be performed by actors in a theatre?

Avowedly: and yet in France, in Germany, in Scandinavia, where dramatic literature, classic as well as modern, actually has its being on the stage, we know that play reading is general; in fact, a playwright whose works are not published receives there no serious consideration. It must never be forgotten that drama also is literature.

In this land of the free, where the Theatre is in control of long-run speculators who neither know anything nor care anything about the dramatic art, printing is virtually the sole means whereby the sincere dramatist is enabled to address his public. And even those few worthy plays that somehow succeed in getting on our lucre-ridden stage are as a rule altered and vulgarized by the stage-director, so that it is for the printed form only that the author can be held wholly responsible.

Readers there are, too, elderly readers more especially, perhaps, who for some cause or other dislike theatergoing, and may agree with Mr. Howells, who said recently of a certain play of M. Brieux's that he had "merely seen it on the stage, where no play has really its best chance. . . In my armchair at home I do not have to suffer any waits between the acts; nobody crushes across my knees coming in or going out, or makes me rise to let him by. The dramatist has not me at his mercy, but I have him at mine, and I can shut him off, or up, at an instant's notice. . . With a really good play one really does not need the stage."

Perhaps Mr. Howells is not entirely serious in all this (and from the Theatre of Tomorrow, of course, these arbitrary annoyances will be absent!); but even so, there are estimable persons who prefer reading a drama to seeing and hearing it. It is not any more to such, however, than to those who delight in studying the text of a play both before and after attending it in a theatre that this matter of a better dramatic typography is significant.

For even after the dawn of that millenial day when *Künstler* and *Stadt-theater* are to be found in every American city, the publishing and reading of drama will be more common and discriminative than ever before. Printing is the supreme, the final test of a drama—a test, of course, that the overtly commercial play makes no pretence of meeting. Here there is no stage director's ingenuity to beguile; no actors' artistry or actresses' charm to falsify characterization; no scenic or electric 'effects' to bolster inherent weaknesses; and here mob applause of fustian and claptrap does not enter in: the play must be judged in its relation to life.

THE FLIGHT AND THE PASSING

By Marion Couthouy Smith

I have risen to the verge of cosmic space;
The infinite Light has touched the edge of my wing;
I have looked over the round rim of the world,
As it circled my magic flight.
The fields and the rivers have vanished,
And the cities have melted away beneath me;
For an instant they sparkled like jewels,—
Then the white ocean of cloud rolled over them,
Making a sea-path for my burning keel.

The wind has struck me and stung me,
And laughed, and sung in my ears, and flung away;
Returning now in wrath, it buffets and rocks me,
And eddies in whirls about my swaying flight.
Eyes look out of the infinite waste of blue,
And pierce me with mockery!
The cold is a living thing,
To cling about me, and press me,
And drive the life in me back to my burdened heart.
Lifting—lifting—I go from verge to verge,
Till mists of mighty wings are beating around me,
And I hear their music arise, a deep diapason,
And feel the Presences of space.

The great angels are jealous!
They who guard the flight of the eagles,
And tread the paths where only the winds have run.
They have drawn the air from beaneth me.
And made vast chasms under my fragile wings.
. . . . I drop—I fall! . . . . .
The eddies suck me down to the depths of air. . . .
They are lifting, with giant hands,
The soul away from my flesh.

Lo—now there are wings no longer,
No longer the clamor of flight,
Nor the rush of wind,
Nor the terror. . . . . .
Wings and body are flung like wandering leaves,
Rocking and swaying through billows of yielding mist,
To the cruel breast of the waiting earth!

But I stay—I lift—I lift—!
Arms under me—eyes above me—
Warm, warm and still—I lie—
And drift—and drift away—
Into infinite rest.

THE POET

By Gerhardt Hauptmann

Translated from the German by L. M. Kueffner

Like a harp for the wind be thy soul, O poet!
If a breath steal over the strings but ever so lightly,
  Yet in the world-woe's breathing
  They must vibrate forever.
  For the world-woe is the root of the heavenward longing.
Thus the root of your songs is grounded
  Deep in the woe of earth;
But their leaf-crowned tops reach upward
Into the light of Heaven.

THE TEMPLE STEPS

By J. T.

I

There loomed a Dream at Slumber's lonelier Gate,
I live, and hold the symbols of a dream
Desires inviolate,—
Unshaken through the Ages' troubled thunder
No death shall rend my dream and soul asunder,—
I trod where suns by hoaried myriads gleam
Like starlit sand around the shore of Space;
There dawned my deathless dream—
In Regions all-transcending human wonder,
Was't empty vision, sinks that awful Place—
In Time, in Space, akin to God or Fate
Or either's Unseen Face?
Eternal as the Worm that dieth never,
Outblazing Milky Ways that flame forever—
Through fire it visioned forth a vaster State,
Create in Thought who mingles all, begot
Alone, without a Mate;
No night shall ever mind from dream dissever.

II

Eternity was but a flowerful Plot
Whereon I knelt,—the Ether distant haze
And Space a vale forgot;
The pillared firmament showed shallow-founded—
An atom circumscribed and death-surrounded;
Unsunned, Immensity's immortal rays
Pulsed swiftly through the star-dust, throbs of Time,
(His aeons died but days
Upon that Place no age has ever bounded):
'Twas not the Heart of Light, white fire sublime
Enkindling Chaos, twinkling clouds of suns
Like midnight's wintry rime;

'Twas surer life than beats with dull pulsation
Through nebulae that blind each constellation—
It slew the sudden Dawn whose breaking stuns
Void Darkness into motion; through Night's veins
Light's life but sluggish runs—
Inevitably creeps to slow cessation.

III

A swifter Day than stealthy Time attains
Broke blazing down in torrents more than light,—
Besprent the starry Plains;
Thus brake the Dawn that fired my living vision—
A flame that mocked the suns with proud derision;
Celestial rains ne'er freshened Heaven's sight
For seraphs' eyes as leaped those Plains to Day
From dull and day-like white—
Then night was cleft from Day with keen decision;
Before that Dawn the face of Light went gray,
'Twas absolute, all days departed thence—
Their false fires flamed away;
I left that Place, and lonely, sought a Higher
(The Dayspring would have spoken, 'Soul, aspire');
I poised above a vaster Imminence
Than sheer Space rears against the cinder-wrack
Of ruined clusters dense
With blackened stars and globes of titan fire,
With galaxies and unborn worlds yet black,
I paused, until the Farther Crags unseen
Should hurl the Day-Tide back;
Alone I waited, watched and never trembled,—
The spirit of a thought my dream resembled,—
What hoped my soul to see,—the sudden sheen
Of life on tombèd systems, or the sum
Of all grim Time hath been—
The marching of a Universe for Death assembled?

IV

Perchance deep Everlastingness I'd plumb—
Reach under perished shoals of dawns, and sound
Infinities to come;

No dream it seemèd, else had terror taken
Wing, and left my soul by hope unshaken;
What epoch, ere one boundless wave swept round
All vaulted heavens that gemmed the blazing Plain
Like jewels on frosty ground—
What lapse awaited I by years forsaken
Is compassed not by any vision's brain;
The slowly numbered aeons since Time began
Delay its name in vain: . . .
From Crags unseen I saw the Day-Tide brighten,
Flung high in riot billows, poised to frighten
Back to Night the puny mind of man—
Irrevocably drown his soul in sleep
As only light-floods can,—
Down Slumber's depths no Dawn shall ever lighten.

V

An opal is an image of the Deep,
A sudden sea of lustrous green and blue
Where skyward billows leap—
Where wizard waters welter flaming-crested
O'er crags and pools by demon-dreams infested,—
Where ever blooms the smouldering foam anew
In multitudes of wandering moons aflame
Through clouds of glowing dew,—
An opal is an Ocean fire-invested.

VI

'Twas as a Sea of seas the Day-Tide came,
Each drop an opalescent Ocean, vast,
Devouring Number's name;
Should He who knows all Oceans, rise and shatter
Their mountained waters down to drops and scatter
Flame-rains of opal down the vacant Past,
Then will each drop a Sea inseparate—
The Day-Tide would outlast
In Fire that Universe of Light-born matter.

VII

Should all fair years that ever rose, belate
Their dawns to one supremest hour, should all
The tides one moon await
To flow and glow in unisons eternal—
A harmony of orbèd flames supernal
O'er time and agèd Time's lone fall,
Their mingled fires might not outflame the Tide
Or their swift greens recall
On changing azure any field so vernal
As one Tide-Blossom, shimmered, opened wide
And calm in amethystine scintillance—
Infinity's bright Bride;
My vision sprang to birth, the Tide swept nearer,
Its cloud-hewn beauty blazed in symbols clearer;
I saw Day's luminescent Armies glance
Through sinuous evolutions, folding spheres
And fires in mazy dance—
'Twas more than movement,—Motion's Mind austerer.

VIII

O lonely tomb that lonelier Thought uprears
Against the tyrant Night, what tongue may tell
Thy mystery to Dream's e'er-wakeful ears,
For, in thy womb, unborn those Lights must wander
Forever lost, unquenchably they squander
Their mighty meanings o'er thy blackened hell
Where Chaos broods his undisputed way,—
All desolate the swell
Of thoughts a Universal Soul might ponder;
Return, immortal-visaged Day—
Thy Tomb a Temple was, an undreamed fane
Outlasting quick decay
Of ageless marble myth and god-beclouded,
Whose every atom spins a richly crowded
World of memories; flow back again,
Eternal Day-Tide, ebb within my reach
On yonder deathless Plain
Where first I knelt, all sense and sleep-enshrouded,—
Build up once more those Temple Steps, ah! teach

My eager dream what feet have ever trod
Infinity's calm beach—
What Beings ever watch the Day-Tide breaking,—
What Pilgrims leave the Temple Steps, forsaking
Light, to tread with holier feet unshod
Those hallowed Halls that glowed as dreams beyond
And shadowed into God,
Perfect, mystical, serene awaking.

IX

Alas! My dream fell faint; as Day-Tide dawned
The marching symbols ranged Immensities
As if a ghostly wand
Appointed all to Order, slowly bringing
Purpose out of Chaos, dayward flinging
Flocculi that blazed their opal seas
In level lines of clouded fire ablush
With Dawn's bright mysteries;
Then swift as Thought, all leaden dreams outwinging
I saw the Temple Steps leap out, a rush
Of vision absolute from tumbled smoke—
Aflame their crimson flush;
And down those Steps the Universe descended—
A moment seen, a moment comprehended;
In soundless majesty pure Time awoke
And showed one Face; the Steps of ALL alone
I saw: frail vision broke—
I fled an end of what has never ended.

X

Why should my sleep be troubled with a moan
For One I saw not,—life go bowed with care
For fateful hope unknown;
I dreamed the pulse that stunned to moving being
Stars and dust of stars was Thought's Decreeing,—
Imagining sublime of God's despair—
The very Mind of minds creating Fate,
And Beauty everywhere
Brake as the Day Unseen yet ever seeing;
So when the Dawn at Death's last solemn Gate

Outfires all stars and blasts their beams to gray
Shall I, disconsolate
Gaze back upon my soul with chill regretting—
Curse impotently clouds of dull forgetting
Enshadowing all, save one reluctant Ray
Where still those Temple Steps fling back full Day
And Reason waits her Mate,
Bright in the risen Sun that knows no setting?

'TIS SHE

By Eduard Mörike

Translated from the German by P. H. Thomson

Spring now lets her azure band
Flutter on the breezes gaily;
Sweet familiar odors daily
Roam presageful, through the land.
Violets unblown
Dream they'll soon be coming.
—Hark, I hear a distant harp's low tone!
Spring, ah yes, 'tis you!
I have felt you coming!

REFORM

By Mary Carolyn Davies

A child's soul dwelling in a man—
(They call such poets here)—
With puzzled wondering began
To look about the sphere.

Why is there food of misery,
And coverlid of sin?
Why should a world so fair to see
Be foul, he said, within?

The wee stars twinkling answered him,
Their laughter swelling out:
It's such a joke upon the world
For neighbors round about.

The earth-folk will not make earth fair,
They're such a curious race:
They're waiting for some God to come
And tidy up the place.

THE MAKERS

By Mary Carolyn Davies.

God looked down wondering, where men groped and fought,
And struggled that they might put down the beast
Within them and be masterly and new;
One groaned and beat himself for sore despair,
One fell and rose and bleeding climbed to light
Only to fall. They built but to rebuild.

And God looked musing down, and pondering said,
"You made me, can you not then make yourselves?"

ON A FIGURE OF FRANCE CRUCIFIED

(*Painted by Romaine Brooks*)

By Gabriele d'Annunzio

Translated from the Italian by Laura Fullerton Gilbert

Have they raised the bitter sponge upon the lance
to thy fair fallen lip, O Holy One?
The Cross without a Christ, who yet hath won
to this the second wound's still sufferance.

Yet is her eye as clear as clear Provence,
yet is her breast soft as Messinian spring,
at her pierced feet is patience fashioning,
And sweetness drops on girdling violence.

he wind of combat, and the day's young gold,
and unseen Aprils, and the love of love,
and songs as yet unsung, breathe with her breath.

While on her brow the fire that leads to death
gleams whitely. From her mantle spread above
the shadow of a god falls, dark and cold.

II

O eager face, O pity without sleep,
courage that never yet refused the cup,
and strength thine own fair flesh to offer up
and with thy crimson blood libations keep!

Beneath what sign, upon what pyre piled deep,
for what alarum, what Advent sang thy faith
in torment? Higher than a lark, unscathe
swift toward the sun we saw thy spirit leap.

For as one man the good race doth awaken.
'Twixt helmet bars, Duguesclin's smile doth glint
down there, where all the new-made heroes are.

In holy vestments clad, thou hast partaken
of earthly elements. But, crowned with lint
Thy brow seems suffering for a future star.

III

France, gentle France, most blessèd heroine,
love of the world, ardent thy cross to bear
as at Antioch, when Godfrey chose to wear
the crown of thorns beneath his capuchin.

upright before thy God as at Bouvines,
as at Rocroi, thy glory finds thee kneeling;
immortal, like the grass thro' ruins stealing
or bordering thy tombs with living green;

fresh as the sprays of thy white poplar-trees
[illegible]
[illegible]

[illegible] He makes thy winding-sheet
[illegible]
"[illegible] were the world!"

IV

Behold the spring-time of our love. Now gloat
o'er thy shed blood, exult in this thy sorrow,
What though the flowers pluck'd for many a morrow
shall be thy heroes sprung from hidden root.

"I'll wind my horn" says One, and at the note
they die. O wind-tossed oaks, O glorious guest!
And dead, each carves his image in thy breast,
high on thy hills, or deep in vales remote.

O combatants, hark to the signal, hark!
Souls held in bodies as in vines the spring,
As flag to staff, in scabbard as the sword.

The horn of Roland sounds, and all is dark;
With bloody mouth and temples clamoring
"Strike, France, oh, strike!" he cries, "It is my word."

SONGS OF THE SLAVE

By Svatopluk Cech

Translated from the Bohemian by Otto Kotouc

I

Slaves. - Good it is to rest the weary body in the light of the moon
'Neath the palms here. Feasting over, our custodian sleeps now;
Sit down 'mongst us, tuneful comrade, and thy sweetly sounding strings tune;
Let thy song reveal the golden thoughts spun in your dreamy brow.

A Slave Girl. Sing of flowers and stars!

A Young Slave. Praise sing thou to a maid's fair form and eye.

Another. Ring the bells of jest.

An Old Man. Disclose the deeds of ages long gone by.

The Bard. Other themes by far today resound through my unhappy soul,
Like the roar and [illegible] of the storms that o'er the heavens roll.
Far from those are flowery adornment, girlish grace, and heroes' pride
Sighs groans, grasp of teeth and clash of chains now in my themes abide.

Slave. Clash of chains is but a common strain to us, yet play and sing.
Sobbing thy voice [illegible] sweeping [illegible] and guard the whip [illegible]

III

Of a slave begot, gave
Me birth likewise a slave;
Childhood's lullaby song
Was but clash of chain,—
Through my life extended
Rusted shackles sounded
Morn till nightfall along
Life's deserted main.

Scarce felt my nape at length
Youthful power and strength,
Yoke of steel was firmly
Bound about my neck:
Taught to bow my head low,
Kisses did I bestow
On the lash that smote me:
Brow beat earth at beck.

I, a weakly slave, grew
'Mongst my brother serfs true;
Chains for jewels clinked just
At each sister's side;
And where'er my gaze dwelt
Anger, shame, pain I felt,
As with heads bowed to dust
Slaves dwelt nation wide.

Ill did I bear my fate—
My bond's music grate,
Chasing from my cabin
All the charm of life.
When with stormy feeling
I sought my lyre's healing,
In my song accursed, din
Of my chains was rife.

Still my eye would often beam
With a flickering gleam:
I would strain my ear past
Woods and streams along:

I deemed that yon somewhere
Triumphs 'neath the heav'ns there,
Flies our hallo at last,
Freedom's sunny song.

When my head I would lift,
Low again would it drift;
On in shame and sorrow
Years succession gave.
Clings the yoke still to me
And the eye waits vainly
Dawn's redemptory glow:
I will die a slave.

My head e'en now bends low,
White locks my temples show;
Hopes no longer attain
Autumn's riper hue,—
Shackled my hands I know
Cursèd the yoke I'll never o'erthrow,—
In my grave shall that chain
Rest beside me too.

THE GOLDEN PLOVER

By Richard Butler Glaenzer

A song for you, golden plover:
Not the song of a lover
Who dreams of a blush,
Nor the song for a thrush
Whose music is tremulous, sweet;
But a song for a heart that dares tempest or hush,
A measure for wings that are fleet.

Fleet . . . fleet . . . fleet . . . !
Who but the winds can trace you, chase you?
Flutter of lightning, you southward sweep,
To the wonder of thunder you overleap.
Faster . . . faster . . . faster . . . !
Who but the winds can face you, pace you?
Fearless of foaming and booming and crash;
Scorner of breeze, adorner of zephr;
Come . . . gone . . in a flash!
Speedier . . . speedier . . . speedier . . . !
Who but the winds can overtake you?
Who but a gale can check and shake you?
Who but a hurricane can make you
Drop to the earth whose worth shall wake you
From your frenzied trance of flight?

Like a volley of shot your flocks alight,
Scattering gracefully over the sedge,
Palled in spume from the cauldron's edge.
Surer than furrow's is breaker's pledge:
Whom the welter of sea and sky invite,
On the lands of man show sudden fright.

A song for you, golden plover:
Not the song for a lover
Who dreams of a flush
Of delicate plumes that gleam as they hover
Over a flower they make less fair;
But a song of wings whose miraculous rush
Is measure atune with the air.

Warriors, not courtiers you,
Your courting season through,—
Dotterel darts, befeathered sober,
Mellowed with yellow by brisk October,
Who, from his Nova Scotian post,
Hurls you over the swirled Atlantic—
Hurls you, pipers corybantic—
Straight for the Venezuelan coast:
Two thousand miles! Two thousand miles!
While the gods of Air crowd heaven's aisles,
With loud-fleered taunts for the vaunting boast
That man is peer of their wing-born host.

"Aie! . . . Aie! . . . Aie! . . ."
Moans the rancorous Sheol of winds.
Out of the ooze of the sulphurous Gulf
Springs into fury the Mocker of Masts,
Snarls through the Caribs and harries with blasts:
Shrieking seeks you, sprites from the North;
Ruffles and buffets you, grapples to check you;
With maniac might would baffle and wreck you
But for the froth of sabre-reefed isles
Which, faint through the smoke of desolate miles,
Whispers, encourages, beckons you forth,
Calls you to fall from the maelstrom of wiles:
"Oh-èh! . . . Oh-èh! . . . Oh-èh! . . .
Safety we promise and shelter and rest
From the howling Fiend of the foul Southwest!"
Out of the fray of reeking grey
Whines the cheated Harpy of winds:
"Aie! . . . Aie! . . . Aie! . . ."

On the shoulder of Night expires her rage;
So melts to calm the ocean's wrath:
Day blooms like a rose on a beryl path
In the Garden of Peace of the Golden Age.

Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee!
Joy but no peace for you, golden plover:
Only in June may you play the lover,
Satined in wooing black and gold.
Till then the leagues that you will cover,—

The lands beneath your wings unrolled—
Are all the leagues of land that stretch
North and south of the western Line.
Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee!
From Labrador of the fog-wreathed pine,
Down through Bermuda's salt-stained vetch;
Over the Amazon's maze of vine,
Into the pampas of Argentine:
Above the earth, across the sea,
You follow the summer's ascendant sign,
You shun all scenes by the sun bereft.
Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee!
Spring of the north is astir, golden plover!
Up and a-wing to its glad decree!
Back, with a ridge of the world to your left,
You mottle the length of a continent's chine
To weave through Alaska's tundra-weft
The gold of your yearly jubilee:
There joy and peace to love combine!
Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee! Wee-o-wee!

Coodle! . . . Coodle! . . . Hist!
Your golden rest is over:
Off with your splendor! Away, away!
On with the coat of the rover!
Dip it and dye it in eastern mist!
Plunge again over the dun Atlantic,
Blaze again southward your cycle frantic!
Away with you, loiterers, darts of October,
Shafts that are swift as the light but more sober,
Wraiths of the sea's or the sky's autumn grey!
Away from the love of the north that elates you!
Off to the feast of the south that awaits you!
Flutter and rise with the joy that translates you
To sprites of the air from creatures of clay!
Onward, onward, spirits of fleetness!. . .
Faster . . faster! . . speedier . . speedier!—
Gone! Vanished! Lost like the sweetness
Of dawn in the ripening power of day!

GLIMPSE OF A CHILDHOOD

By Rainer Maria Rilke

Translated from the German by Margarete Münsterberg

The darkness in the room is pregnant, seeming
To fold about the boy who hides himself;
And when his mother enters, as if dreaming,
A glass is trembling on the quiet shelf.
She feels that now her entrance is betrayed,
And kisses her small boy: "Oh, you are there!". . .
They glance at the piano where she played
On many evenings the belovèd air
That strangely on the child its magic laid.

He sits quite still. With wondering eyes he sees
Her hand weighed down beneath the ring and slow,
As if it walked against a gale in snow,
Move on the snow-white keys.

RENUNCIATION

(*Ensagung*)

By Isabelle Schwartz

Translated from the German by E. W. Triess

And tho God never gave me
Thy spring, yet let me be,
In the golden peace of autumn,
The evening glow to thee!

And tho I may not rest me,
O soul of mine, by thee;—
The quiet of thy slumbers,
Thy dream, O let me be!

Tho other songs may soothe thee,
And slumber bring to thee;—
When sinks the night in silence,
Thy prayer, O let me be!

THOU SHALT NOT PASS

By Felice Cavallotti

Translated from the Italian by Margaret E. N. Fraser

But if one day in paleness of hoar-frost,
Your splendid hue, O lovely rose is lost,
    If, shattered by the chilling blast,
    You bend your dying stem at last
And one by one your leaves let fall—
Poor yellowed leaves—and scentless all—
    Grieve not—those leaves upon my heart
    I'll gather up—nor from them part—
Bright days and years may fade, alas!
Sweet love of mine, Thou shalt not pass.

SPRING AND WINTER

By Gretchen Warren

There's nought like spring
When the first travail of the drowsy earth
Stirs the warm pools, and brings green leaves to birth;
Child-leaves that ever prattle to the trees
Of how the breezes played:—no storm know these,
No weary age, nor death: yea, spring is best.

But winter comes
And with the ancient healing of her ways
The broken leaves in quiet graves she lays,
While o'er the earth a spotless, solemn shroud
Spreads wide. Then she waits patient, with head bowed,
Sure they will rise again:—nay, that is best.

SACRIFICE

By Gretchen Warren

How long, O Lord, wilt Thou Thy secret keep
From us, who, groping up the cruel steep
Of darkened bitter years
Still cry to Thee for light before we sleep?

Is it a war Thou wagest with some foe
Beyond the power of mortal mind to know,
And in Thy lonelier night
Art Thou too toiling as we toil below?

I dream that in Thy hidden battle-world
Hang solemn bannered gleams of Hope unfurled—
And, slaying Death and Sin
Men's souls, like quivering piteous spears are hurled.

If dreams be true, then may Thy will be done
In me, who of that endless army one
Now give one life the more:
Use it, O Lord, before my course be run.

Take up my loving will, yea lift this blade
Of trembling steel which in Thy forge was made—
Fling it on Sin and Death:—
Though broken, lost, I shall not be afraid.

THE BEST OF THE NEW BOOKS

In this list we shall include only such books as in our opinion are really worth while. No extended reviews will be given, only the briefest description. The fact that a book is listed is the highest commendation we can give.

THE MONEY MASTER, by Gilbert Parker is a delightful story of modern Canadian life, being the curious history of Jean Jacques Barbile, his labors, his loves and his ladies. (Harper's, $1.35 net.)

THE LITTLE ILIAD, by Maurice Hewlett is an unsolved story told in a delightfully naïve and refreshing manner. If you wish to immerse yourself for several hours in a world of wit, felicity and humor, you must follow in *The Little Iliad* the adventures of this modern Helen. (Lippincott's, $1.35 net.)

AROUND OLD CHESTER, by Margaret Deland is another collection of delightful tales of Dr. Lavendar's community. (Harper's, $1.35 net.)

HEART OF THE SUNSET is Rex Beach's latest, a lively story of adventure on the Texas-Mexican border. (Harper's, $1.35 net.)

PLAYS FOR SMALL STAGES, by Mary Aldis is a group of five one-act plays written for a small theatre. (Duffield, $1.25 net.)

The latest addition to the Windermere Series is Stevenson's TREASURE ISLAND, excellently illustrated with fourteen full page color plates by Milo Winter. (Rand, McNally Co, $1.35 net.)

This year L. Frank Baum adds the SCARECROW OF OZ to the famous Oz books. Like its predecessors it is copiously illustrated in both black and white and color by John R. Neill. Reilly & Britton Co, $1.25 net.)

MEMORIES OF INDIA, by Sir Robert Baden-Powell is a volume of recollections of soldiering and sport covering a quarter of a century. The reminiscences are interesting and well told and the many illustrations by the author, both in color and black and white, add greatly to the charm of the volume. (David McKay, $3.50 net.)

MOYLE CHURCH-TOWN, by John Trevenor is a fine, clean, exciting romance of old Cornwall at the time when Virginia was still a British Colony. (Alfred A. Knopf, $1.40 net.)

HOMO SAPIENS, by Stanislaw Przybyszewski is a very modern love-story—it might be called the love-story of a superman. And yet, as in most Slavic fiction, there is very much more to *Homo Sapiens* than just the story. (Alfred A. Knopf, $1.50 net.)

GOD'S MAN, by George Bronson-Howard is a drama of life to-day in America, with scenes set in New York City and on Long Island. It is an absorbing chronicle, stirring and dramatic. (Bobbs-Merrill Co., $1.40 net.)

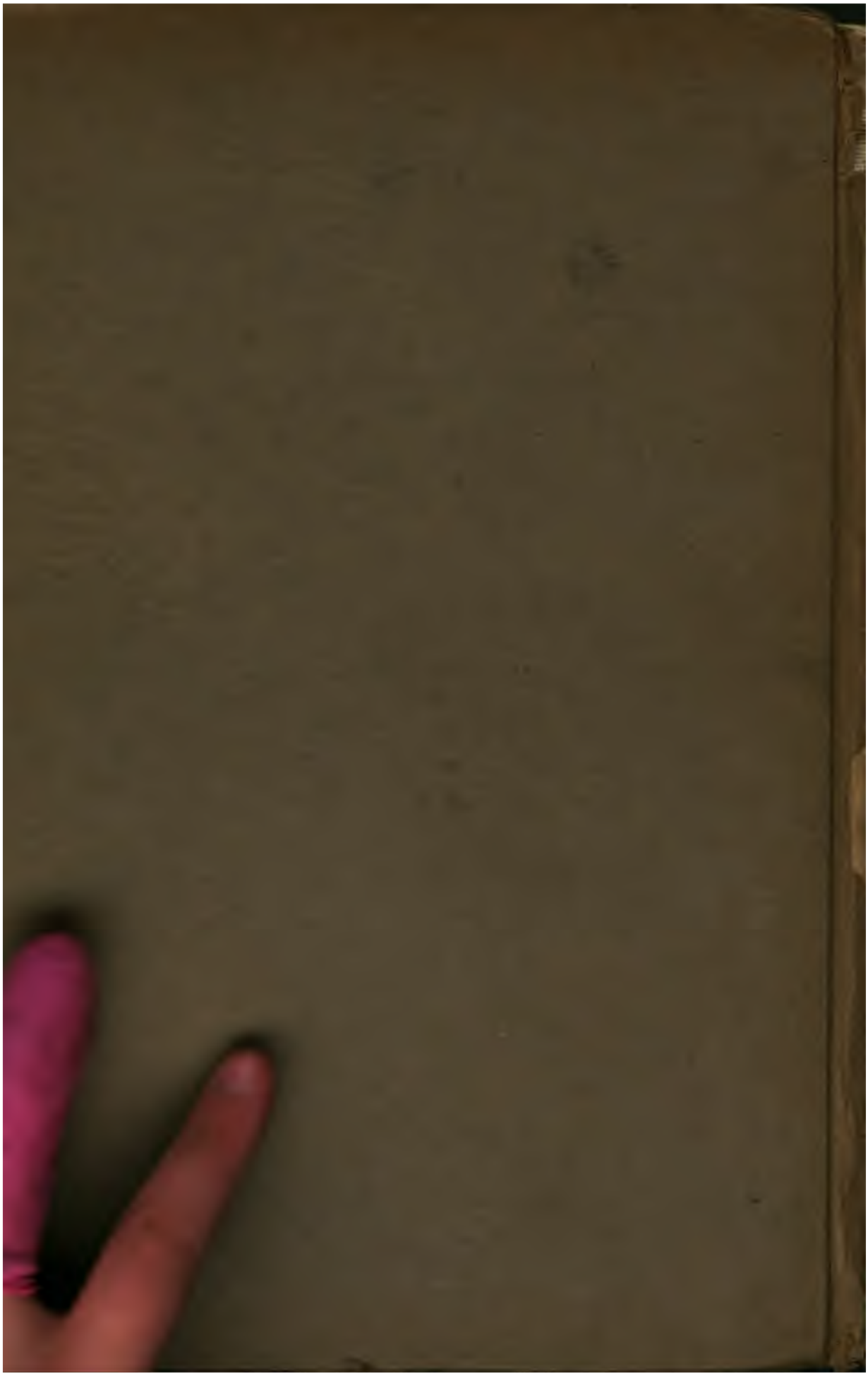
William Stanley Braithwaite's ANTHOLOGY OF MAGAZINE VERSE AND YEAR BOOK OF AMERICAN POETRY has become a recognized and valuable literary institution. The volume for 1915 has just been issued and shows throughout Mr. Braithwaite's fine discrimination and exact literary judgment. It is a volume that should be owned by every lover of American poetry. (Gomme and Marshall, $1.50 net.)

HEART OF EUROPE, by Ralph Adams Cram is an eloquent history of northern France, Belgium and Flanders, written as only a man could write who was saturated with knowledge of its art and beauty and knew how to estimate the loss to the world by its devastation. (Scribner's, $2.50 net.)

THE SPELL OF FLANDERS, by Edward Neville Vose is the story of a Twentieth Century Pilgrimage in a Sixteenth Century Land, just before the outbreak of the great War. Capitally illustrated. (The Page Co., $2.50 net.)

THE SPELL OF BELGIUM, by Isabel Anderson is written in an entertaining style and few readers will be able to turn its pages without experiencing in some degree the enthusiasm of its author. The illustrations are excellent. (The Page Co., $2.50 net.)

WILD BIRD GUESTS AND HOW TO ENTERTAIN THEM, by Ernest Harold Baynes, is a book that will appeal to every friend of American wild birds. Excellently illustrated and with an introduction by Theodore Roosevelt. (E. P. Dutton & Co., $2.00 net.)

THE COLOUR OF PARIS, these historic, personal and local descriptions by the members of the Academy Goncourt have been beautifully illustrated in color by the Japanese artist, Yoshio Markino. It is a book that will be treasured by those who love Paris. (Dodd, Mead and Co., $3.00 net.)

Washington Irving's KNICKERBOCKER HISTORY OF NEW YORK with Maxfield Parish's illustrations is now offered